Forgiveness and Guilt as Political Intersubjectivity?

An Exploration of Hannah Arendt's Changing Reflections

Thomas Østergaard Wittendorff

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization
of the European University Institute

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Contents

Abstract

Despite the extensive interest in Hannah Arendt's ideas and the equally prolific literature on forgiveness—in which Arendt is regarded as a pioneer in claiming forgiveness to be of political significance—there has to date been no monograph on this aspect of her thought. The purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to provide a comprehensive exploration of Arendt's account of forgiveness, its development, and its place and role in Arendt's thought as a whole. To achieve this, I inquire into Arendt's writings on guilt and responsibility too; for after all, guilty humans are what makes the question of forgiveness relevant. Moreover, countering the conventional dismissal of Arendt's early work as "unworldly", I argue that Arendt's project of recovering the public world of politics was not only a political but also a philosophical project. Already in her 1928 dissertation on Augustine, Arendt began to grapple with Martin Heidegger's notions of *Mitsein* and *in-der-Welt-sein*, and to develop her corrective political notion of worldliness as "being-in-the-world-*with*." Arendt's dissertation can be read, then, as a contribution to the "controversy over intersubjectivity" that arose in phenomenological circles in interwar Germany, and in which Arendt's theological teacher, Rudolf Bultmann, also participated. Likewise, it can be read as an implicit criticism of Heidegger's notion of guilt. From this vantage point, I argue that Arendt's thinking on forgiveness and guilt developed as part of an ongoing confrontation with Heidegger's vision of intersubjectivity and guilt—not merely as an outright repudiation, but rather as a critical-transformative appropriation. Furthermore, in contrast to the near-exclusive focus on *The Human Condition* (1958) in the scholarly literature, I establish that Arendt contemplated forgiveness in many other texts, both before and after 1958, and continuously revised her account. In fact, Arendt was initially altogether opposed to forgiveness. Her turn to approving forgiveness was connected to a different view as to what forgiveness is; essentially, it was contingent upon a political-intersubjective reinterpretation: namely, that she began to see forgiveness and the correlating notion of guilt as genuinely political-intersubjective phenomena.

Acknowledgements

For a tragic reason, my doctoral work was put on hold for two and a half years. Shortly after having given birth to our lovely daughter, Frida, my partner, Maria, fell ill with incurable brain cancer. She passed away eight days after Frida turned two years old. After the diagnosis of the disease, it was like living in a parallel world. It is hard to imagine a more terrible disease than the kind of brain cancer Maria suffered from. As the extraordinary brain tumor survivor, Ben Williams, notes "brain cancer carries its own special horror. Your brain is the foundation of your personality, your intellect, your emotions, your motor functions—the very basis of your being. As a tumor invades your neutral tissue, your abilities deteriorate to the point where you can no longer function."[1] Furthermore, not only the disease itself, but also the treatment of it causes suffering. Thus, Maria went through a range of arduous treatments, such as long-lasting chemotherapy, radiation, high doses of steroids, and wide-awake brain operations.

Fortunately, despite all this, Frida is doing well; she is glad and confident, and much of Maria lives on in her. I wish Maria could see that. This dissertation is dedicated to Maria, in loving memory—along with a promise of doing my utmost to take care of Frida.

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When I resumed the writing of my dissertation, I could barely remember what I had been working on. I owe a great debt of gratitude to a number of people for their encouragement and support in resuming my work. A heart-felt thanks to my mother for her frequent visits and indispensable help with taking care of Frida. Without her help, it would not have been possible for me to complete this dissertation. Special thanks also to Frida's maternal grandfather and to Maria's faithful friend, Maren, for their great solicitude for Frida. Also, I would like to say thank you to my friend, Christian Kühne, for his support.

[1] Ben Williams, *Surviving "Terminal" Cancer: Clinical Trials, Drug Cocktails, and Other Treatments Your Oncologist Won't Tell You About* (Minneapolis: Fairview Press, 2002), 1.

In resuming my research, I greatly benefitted from the generous offer of a working space at the University of Copenhagen's Division of German Studies. Special thanks to Detlef Siegfried, Jørn Boisen, and Anne Marie Jensen. To Detlef I am thankful, too, for having invited me to give a guest lecture. Similarly, I would like to thank Inge Birgitte Siegumsfeldt and Claudia Welz for inviting me to give a presentation at the Center for the Study of Jewish Thought in Modern Culture.

My co-supervisor, Paul Leer-Salvesen, merits a special mentioning for his extraordinary support, academically as well as personally. Without his exceptional encouragement and considerateness, I doubt that I would have reached the finishing line. Unlike one instructor in moral philosophy I once had, who began by declaring that one should not expect to become an ethical person by studying ethics, Paul is, I think, an exemplary ethicist. Alongside his scholarly qualities, he is wise and a truly fine and profound human being.

At the EUI, it has been a pleasure and privilege to take part in an outstanding social and academic community composed of Ph.D. candidates from throughout Europe (and beyond). While not directly involved in the writing of my dissertation, I would like to mention the Intellectual History Working Group, an assembly consisting predominantly of North European males with a shared tendency to overthinking. Beyond that, I am most grateful to my supervisor, Pavel Kolář. For one thing, I am thankful for his willingness to supervise a dissertation that is marginal to his own interests. Furthermore, I greatly appreciate his extraordinary kindness and sympathy, as well as his forthright attitude to supervision. Needless to say, in returning to work, this was most valuable to me. Moreover, I would like to thank Alexander Etkind. Unfortunately, he arrived too late in the process for me to fully benefit from and incorporate his suggestions. Nonetheless, I appreciate the genuine interest he showed in my project, as well as his scholarly excitement and dedication. In addition, my thanks to Anna Coda Nunziante, the departmental coordinator, for being very helpful and considerate.

In order to increase my knowledge of interwar theology, I have spent some time at the University of Göttingen and the Humboldt University of Berlin. I am thankful for discussions with Martin Laube, Mathias Wilke, Notger Slenczka, and Thomas Kaufmann. For discussions of Bultmann, I am particularly thankful to Niels Henrik Gregersen, University of Copenhagen. Moreover, I have also visited Lund University. Thanks to Jonas Hansson for his most

accommodating attitude and for inviting me to present my work in progress at the Division of the History of Ideas and Sciences. Also, my thanks are due to him and to Svante Nordin for discussing the dissertation with me, and to Victoria Höög for asking me to write an article.

For their comments on various drafts, I would like to warmly thank Jonas Gerlings and Niels Matti Søndergaard. For discussions of various aspects of the dissertation, I am thankful to Jan-Olav Henriksen, Mogens Müller, Odin Lysaker, and Ulrika Björk. Finally, a big thanks to Daniel Midena for his generous help with translating some rather untranslatable passages from Arendt's *Denktagebuch*.

Should I have forgotten someone, I apologize and ask for—forgiveness.

> Verzeihung, oder was gewöhnlich so genannt wird, ist in Wahrheit nur ein Scheinvorgang, in dem der Eine sich überlegen gebärdet, wie der Andere etwas verlangt, was Menschen einander weder geben noch abnehmen können. […] [Sie macht] den hybriden Versuch […], Geschehenes ungeschehen zu machen.
> (Hannah Arendt, 1950.)[2]

> [Der christliche Begriff der Verzeihung] entspringt der christlichen Solidarität zwischen Menschen, die allzumal Sünder sind und sich selbst wie ihren Mitmenschen alles, auch das Böseste, zutrauen. Es ist eine Solidarität, gegründet auf dem fundamentalen Misstrauen in die menschliche Substanz.
> (Hannah Arendt, 1950.) [3]

> Forgiving [is] certainly one of the greatest human capacities and perhaps the boldest of human actions, insofar as it tries the seemingly impossible, to undo what has been done, and succeeds in making a new beginning where everything seemed to have come to an end.
> (Hannah Arendt, 1953.)[4]

Preludium: Revisiting Germany—and Heidegger

In late 1949, for the first time since her flight from the Nazi regime, the Jewish German-American thinker Hannah Arendt (1906-75) travelled back to Germany, working as an emissary for a Jewish organization established to collect and restitute looted Jewish artifacts. In February 1950, she found herself in Freiburg. There, she met with Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), with whom she had had what would become (posthumously) one of the most famous and controversial affairs in twentieth-century intellectual history. What has rendered their affair a matter of dispute is not primarily the fact that it involved two of the most celebrated and controversial thinkers of the twentieth century, still less the cliché-like fact that when their romance began in 1925, Arendt was 18, while Heidegger, her teacher, was 35 and married. Rather, what has provoked controversy above all —or, more to the point, over Arendt's relationship with Heidegger—was what happened after their love affair: namely, that Heidegger became a Nazi, and that Arendt, a Jewish refugee, nonetheless resumed contact with him.[5] This is all the more controversial in light of the notorious fact that

[2] Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, ed. Ursula Ludz and Ingeborg Nordmann (Munick: Piper, 2003), 3, 6.
[3] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 6: "Forgiveness, or what is habitually referred to as such, is in reality only a sham act, in which one person acts superior, as if the other person required something that humans can neither give to nor take from one another. […] [It is] a hubristic attempt to undo what has been done." Translations from non-English literature are my own.
[4] Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," *Partisan Review* 20, no. 4 (1953); rpr. in Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 308.
[5] Their affair did not become widely known until the 1982 publication of what remains the standard biography of Arendt: Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World: A Biography of Hannah Arendt* (New Haven: Yale University

Heidegger never subsequently engaged with the Holocaust, nor distanced himself from, nor apologized for, his own Nazi involvement.

At their meetings in February 1950—and again in March 1950—Arendt and Heidegger discussed issues such as reconciliation, revenge, and guilt. This is demonstrated by their correspondence; or, to be more precise, by the surviving letters from Heidegger to Arendt (he destroyed most of her personal correspondence).[6] On the basis of this correspondence, it is, however, impossible to reconstruct in any detail what they said about these themes. Nevertheless, what we can establish with certainty is that they *did* in fact discuss these issues—and that their discussion points to Arendt's first extant piece on forgiveness, a passionate anti-forgiveness advocacy that she authored in June 1950, upon her return to New York.[7]

Thus, in recalling a conversation they had during "a walk in the valley," Heidegger writes to Arendt: "You are right about reconciliation and revenge."[8] Similarly, Heidegger writes in another letter: "Hannah, reconciliation is rich [*Versöhnung ist solches, was einen Reichtum in sich birgt*], but apparently we must wait for a turning point, when the world changes and overcomes the spirit of revenge."[9] In yet another letter, Heidegger thanks Arendt for having sent him a copy of "Organisierte Schuld [Organized Guilt]," her 1945 essay on how to determine guilt and responsibility in Germany.[10] Heidegger is quick—very quick, indeed—to claim that Arendt's essay "contains an *essential* insight that goes far beyond the German people," arguing in his characteristic style that it "points to a hidden core […] of its *essence* in the history of Being."[11] Declaring that it "made what we talked about that evening [on February 7] clear to me again," Heidegger tells Arendt that at their forthcoming meeting, "I would like to read you a few things on the subject."

Press, 1982). The controversy arose in the mid-1990s, following Elżbieta Ettinger's disputed *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); see below.

[6] Less than a quarter of the surviving correspondence is by Arendt; see Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, *Letters: 1925-1975*, ed. Ursula Ludz, trans. Andrew Shields (New York: Harcourt Inc, 2004). For more biographical information on their reunion, see Antonia Grunenberg, *Hannah Arendt und Martin Heidegger: Geschichte einer Liebe* (Munich: Piper, 2006), 275–316. See also Daniel Maier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 179–91; Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 244–46.

[7] This text is the opening entry of *Denktagebuch*, Arendt's intellectual diary; see below.

[8] Letter from Heidegger dated May 16, 1950. Heidegger and Arendt, *Letters*, 88.

[9] Letter from Heidegger dated May 6, 1950. Heidegger and Arendt, *Letters*, 85; Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, *Briefe 1925 Bis 1975 Und Andere Zeugnisse*, ed. Ursula Ludz (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1999), 105.

[10] Letter from Heidegger dated February 15, 1950. Heidegger and Arendt, *Letters*, 64. Arendt wrote the essay in German in November 1944. It was translated into English and published in January 1945 in the journal *Jewish Frontier* under the title "German Guilt" (reprinted in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 121-32, as "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility"). The German version was published in April 1946: Hannah Arendt, "Organisierte Schuld," *Die Wandlung*, 1, no. 4 (1946), 333-44.

[11] Letter from Heidegger dated February 15, 1950. Heidegger and Arendt, *Letters*, 64-65.

This is no small irony; for, as we will see, if Arendt was critical of Heidegger's way of ontologizing guilt, she had nothing but contempt for his speculative historical-philosophical idea of a "*Seinsgeschichte*, enacted behind the backs of acting men," as she would later sarcastically summarize it.[12] Moreover, it may be safely conjectured that she would have been even more averse to the concept if she had known of Heidegger's infamous *Black Notebooks*.[13]

In their conversation about guilt, Arendt and Heidegger also discussed an image used by Friedrich Hölderlin, the prominent and very philosophically minded poet of German Romanticism, whom Heidegger greatly admired: *die Last von Scheitern* ["the burden of failure," or "the burden of the logs"]. As we shall see, this image figures prominently in Arendt's 1950 "debut text" on forgiveness.

[12] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Vol. 2: Willing*, ed. Mary McCarthy (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 192. Heidegger introduced his notion of *Seinsgeschichte* in the 1940s, after his famous *Kehre* (turn or reorientation); see below.

[13] In these recently published *Schwarze Hefte*, Heidegger politicizes his speculative meta-narrative of the history of being, so as to present groups of people as philosophical categories: Jews, above all, are categorized as symptoms of the abandonment of being. That is, as Peter Tawny observes, Heidegger pursues a bizarre ontological-historical form of anti-Semitism. Peter Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, trans. Andrew J. Mitchell, revised edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 18. For an insightful and admirably balanced essay on the implications of the notebooks for Heidegger's legacy, see Peter E. Gordon, "Heidegger in Black," *New York Review of Books* 61, no. 15 (2014): 26–28.

Introduction

Without doubt, Hannah Arendt's most famous interpretation of forgiveness is that set out in *The Human Condition* in 1958; indeed, this provides the sole basis for the vast majority of the scholarly literature. However, Arendt contemplated forgiveness in many other texts, both before and after 1958, and she continuously revised her account. As already mentioned, her first extant meditation is from 1950; more precisely, from the opening entry of the *Denktagebuch*, Arendt's intellectual diary.[14] For readers familiar with Arendt's interpretation in *The Human Condition*, this text is surprising, if not decidedly confusing. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt's famous contention is that forgiveness should constitute a central aspect of political theory: against the fact that forgiveness "has always been deemed unrealistic and inadmissible in the public realm," she maintains that forgiveness is an indispensable part of political experience, and she criticizes the Western tradition of political thought for having failed to acknowledge this.[15] But in the *Denktagebuch*, in stark contrast, she criticizes not political philosophy, but rather forgiveness itself; a criticism directed not only against the idea that forgiveness is of relevance in the public realm, but also against forgiveness as such.

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a comprehensive exploration of Arendt's changing account of forgiveness, its development, and its place and role in Arendt's thought as a whole. Given that there are already whole libraries of books on Arendt, including many brilliant studies by highly distinguished scholars, a question naturally arises: why yet another? Fundamentally, the answer is that despite the extensive interest in Arendt's ideas and the equally prolific literature on forgiveness, there has to date been no monograph on this aspect of her thought; and there is a need, I argue, for an exploration that paints a more comprehensive and integrated picture of Arendt's thinking on forgiveness.

In order to do this, one needs to inquire into Arendt's notion(s) of guilt—after all, guilty humans are what makes the question of forgiveness relevant; or, to paraphrase Arendt's famous dictum that "where all are guilty, nobody is": if nobody is guilty, there is nobody to be forgiven.[16] Moreover, one must also consider Arendt's distinctive concepts of action and plurality

[14] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 3–8.
[15] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1958] 1999), 243.
[16] Hannah Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," *The Listener* 72 (1964): 185–87, 205. The quotation is from the extended version published posthumously in Hannah Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 28. As we will see, Arendt reiterated this claim repeatedly, from her earliest to her last work.

as a political form of intersubjectivity. This is because she conceptualizes forgiveness as a mode of action that is directed toward human agents and "the inevitable damages resulting from action," or what she terms *trespassing*.[17] In other words, Arendt sets out to frame forgiveness and its recipients as a form of political intersubjectivity.

In what follows, I use the term *intersubjectivity* in a phenomenological sense. For now, suffice to say that while it is sometimes taken to be just another name for "the problem of other minds," this is not how it will be used below; rather, I use it with reference to what the distinguished phenomenologist Dan Zahavi has identified as a distinctive feature of phenomenological treatments of intersubjectivity: namely, that it "requires a simultaneous analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and world." That is, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and world "belong together, they reciprocally illuminate one another, and can only be fully understood in their interconnection."[18] From our perspective, what matters is that a political account of intersubjectivity is interconnected with a political account of subjectivity and world. In addition, another important reason for which I have chosen the term *intersubjectivity* (in preference to *relationality*) is that Arendt's account of forgiveness and her corresponding notion of guilt can be read, I contend, within the context of the so-called "controversy over intersubjectivity." This refers to the fact that intersubjectivity, as Samuel Moyn has argued, "proved perhaps the most controversial topic of debate" in the development of phenomenology in interwar Germany, and "certainly among Heidegger's students."[19]

Before expanding on this and explaining the aims and claims of this dissertation, it is, however, necessary to begin with some background and contextual comments, as well as a survey of the existing scholarly literature.

[17] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239.
[18] Dan Zahavi, *Phenomenology: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 88. I here follow the line of interpretation advocated by Sophie Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality: Hannah Arendt on Political Intersubjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 2018); see below.
[19] Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas Between Revelation and Ethics.* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ Press, 2007), 57.

Background and Previous Research

When Arendt made her case for the political significance of forgiveness during the 1950s, she was entirely alone. Indeed, the mere fact of exploring forgiveness philosophically was exceptional. Yet, over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, this would change—at first slowly; in the last decade of the century at an exponential rate. For obvious historical reasons, in the first period, when meditations on forgiveness were still few and sporadic, there was a marked over-representation of Jewish thinkers. By the same token, virtually all these thinkers contemplated the unforgivable, as symbolized by Auschwitz.[20] The exponential growth in the literature on forgiveness took off about three decades ago. This literature is cross-disciplinary, being apparent in academic fields such as philosophy, psychology, political science, law, literary studies, and theology. The development of forgiveness as an academic theme is often described as an "import" from theology; and true, there are often theological "resonances" and language in allegedly non-theological literature.[21] Still, reflections on forgiveness are in fact also a new phenomenon in theology, which has occurred conterminously with the general, interdisciplinary interest in forgiveness; for while the doctrine of atonement and the doctrine of sin are of course classical theological themes, there is no such thing as a doctrine of forgiveness. Thus, until recently, theological reflections on forgiveness were mere subcategories of these doctrines.[22]

The political interest in forgiveness is in no small part due to the formation of reconciliation commissions in sites of conflict around the world, the most famous example being the one established in 1996 in South Africa under the leadership of the Anglican cleric and Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu.[23] Alongside these endeavors to "institutionalize" forgiveness,

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[20] In addition to Arendt, these thinkers included, among others, Emmanuel Levinas (1906 – 1995), Vladimir Jankélévitch (1903 – 1985), and Jean Améry (1912 – 1978). See Emmanuel Levinas, *Quatre lectures talmudiques* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1968); Emmanuel Lévinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowiwicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Le pardon* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967); Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Forgiveness*, trans. Andrew Kelley (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Jean Améry, *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne: Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten* (München: Szczesny Verlag, 1966); Jean Améry, *At the mind's limits Contemplations by a survivor on Auschwitz and its realities*, trans. Sidney and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

[21] For a critical perspective on the import of Christian ideas (and actors) in responses to mass atrocity, see Thomas Brudholm, "On the Advocacy of Forgiveness after Mass Atrocities," in *Religious Responses to Mass Atrocity*, ed. Thomas Brudholm and Thomas Cushman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 124–56.

[22] See Nigel Biggar, "Forgiveness in the Twentieth Century: A Review of the Literature, 1901–2001," in *Forgiveness and Truth*, ed. Alistair McFadyen and Marcel Sarot (Edinburgh & New York: T & T Clark, 2001), 181. Likewise, although reflections on forgiveness are not entirely unprecedented in the history of philosophy, the widespread thematization of the subject is a recent phenomenon.

[23] Initially, this literature was characterized by a widespread enthusiasm, seeing new hope for politics. Subsequently, more cautious and critical perspectives emerged. See Alice MacLachlan, "The Philosophical Controversy over Political Forgiveness," in *Public Forgiveness in Post-Conflict Contexts*, ed. B.A.M. Stokkom, N. Doorn, and P. Van Tongeren

new political and judicial theories have emerged, centering around the concepts of restorative and transitional justice.[24] Another noteworthy trend is that of public excuses and pleas for forgiveness. As Glen Pettigrove notes, "requests for forgiveness and offers of forgiveness by political, collective agents have become commonplace."[25] This led Jacques Derrida, in a 1999 interview, to suggest that we live in an "age of forgiveness:" "[W]e see not only some individuals but entire communities, professional corporations, church representatives and hierarchs, sovereigns and chiefs of state asking for 'pardon.'"[26]

While Arendt's reflections on forgiveness did not evoke much response at the time of their publication, they have struck a highly responsive chord in the recent literature on forgiveness. As Marie Luise Knott observes, in Arendt's "attempt to reestablish the foundation of the political," there is "hardly another concept […] that has evoked such huge and controversial reaction."[27] In the literature on forgiveness, Arendt's chapter in *The Human Condition* has, as Karen Pagani notes, a "practically universal appeal;" it is "regarded as a hypertext" and "stands as a (perhaps *the*) seminal text."[28] Steven Fergusson makes a similar observation: "Any significant time spent reading the growing body of forgiveness literature […] reveals that one name and one book is foundational, if only as a signpost along the way—Hannah Arendt and her *The Human Condition*. […] Arendt on forgiveness [is cited] as if she were the very font from which the idea came bursting into the world."[29] Even if this is a bit of an overstatement, Arendt certainly is a central point of reference.

Arendt scholarship is also a vast and rapidly growing area of research. As Adam Kirsch notes, Arendt's "scholarly and popular profile is higher today than at any time since she died," and "it is hard to name another thinker of the twentieth century more sought after as a guide

(Intersentia, 2012), 37–64. A pioneering and principal representative of the latter is Jeffrie Murphy, who already in 1988 set out to advocate a more cautious view on forgiveness. Jeffrie G. Murphy, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). For a more recent example, critically re-examining the South African commission, see Thomas Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue: Jean Améry and the Refusal to Forgive* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).

[24] For a recent and comprehensive discussion, see Colleen Murphy, *The Conceptual Foundations of Transitional Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[25] Glen Pettigrove, "Hannah Arendt and Collective Forgiving," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 37, no. 4 (2006): 483.

[26] Jacques Derrida, "Le Siècle et Le Pardon," *Le Monde Des Débats* 9 (1999): 10. English translation at "Pardon English Translation," accessed January 20, 2018, http://fixionsytes.net/pardonEng.htm.

[27] Marie Luise Knott, *Unlearning with Hannah Arendt*, trans. Nanne Mayer, 2015, 64.

[28] Karen Pagani, "Quotable Arendt: Toward a Properly Arendtian Account of Forgiveness," *New German Critique*, no. 127 (February 2016): 147, 161, 141.

[29] Steven Prescott Ferguson, "Political Forgiveness: A Religious Interpretation of Arendt's Views" (University of Southern California, 2006), 37–38 & 60.

to the dilemmas of the twenty-first."[30] By the same token, Arendt has become something of an icon, a posthumous intellectual celebrity, so to speak, being the subject even of stage plays and movies, while in Germany, it is possible to literally step aboard the Hannah Arendt express train.[31] The renaissance of the *streitbare Denkerin* (the polemic or contentious thinker), which has liberated the self-declared pariah from her outsider status, took off in the wake of 1989.[32] Particularly, what had arguably been an impediment to her scholarly profile during the Cold War period—the fact that she defied political classification and was quite immune to ideologizing ("[i]deologies are harmless," she asserted, "only as long as they are not believed in seriously")—came to be widely regarded as her distinguishing feature and *pièce de résistance*. Thus, for intellectuals on the left who, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, were in search of new figures of inspiration, Arendt gained the reputation of being an independent thinker. Concomitantly, where Arendt had previously been labelled a nostalgic Aristotelian (not to mention Richard Wolin's sexist denunciation of her as suffering from "polis envy"), her reflections on and experience of totalitarianism became paradigmatic—the interpretive ground zero from which, as Margaret Canovan argued in her 1992 landmark study, all Arendt's "thought trains" and "virtually [her] entire agenda" proceeded.[33]

Since this turning point, Arendt has been widely invoked in discussions of contemporary politics [examples…] Whereas Arendt's "fierce criticism of Marxism did not," as Marieke Borren observes, "gain her many friends among the adherents of Critical Theory" during the Cold War—not to mention her comparison of the Soviet Union with the Nazi regime under the shared category of totalitarianism—the reception of her work is by now dominated by the contemporary adherents of critical theory.[34] Also gaining prominence during the 1990s, the main alternative to critical theory has been poststructuralism and postmodernism. Presenting Arendt as

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[30] Adam Kirsch, "Beware of Pity. Hannah Arendt and the Power of the Impersonal," *The New Yorker,(January 12, 2009)*, 2009.

[31] On this train and Arendt's icon status in Western academic culture, see Steven E. Aschheim, *Beyond the Border: The German-Jewish Legacy Abroad* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2007), 82–83.

[32] This is Großmann's wording; Andreas Großmann, "Renaissance Einer Streitbaren Denkerin: Hannah Arendt in Der Neueren Diskussion," *Philosophische Rundschau* 44, no. 3 (1997): 208–33.

[33] Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001), 31; Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge u.a.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 7.

[34] Its leading proponents include Seyla Benhabib, Albrecht Wellmer, and Habermas. Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, second (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Albrecht Wellmer, in *Hannah Arendt on Judgment: The Unwritten Doctrine of Reason*, ed. Larry May and Jerome Kohn (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 33–52; Jürgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," *Social Research*, 1977, 3–24. Other influential left-leaning "schools" include communitarianism, republicanism, and participatory democrats.

"as *the* postmodern and postmetaphysical political theorist," one of the main proponents of this line of interpretation, Dana Villa, has criticized critical theorists and communitarians for domesticating and misappropriating Arendt, that is, for "enlisting her in their less radical philosophical or political projects."[35]

In acclaiming Arendt as a fiercely independent thinker, some of her self-descriptions—along with her stark claims about the irrelevance of tradition to understanding totalitarianism—are heavily cited: that she was an intellectual pariah, who exercised "*selbst-denken*," "thinking without a banister" and "pearl diving" in the fragments of the past, in a situation in which the thread of tradition had been irretrievably broken. In the judgment of one of Arendt's critics, Walter Laqueur, we are witnessing a veritable "Arendt cult."[36] Indeed, Laqueur's wholesale repudiation of Arendt notwithstanding, it is fair to say, I believe, that the "celebration" of Arendt as an independent thinker has gone too far and is in need of moderation: if there is generally reason to be skeptical when someone claims to be eclectic or a freethinker, Arendt is no exception. Thus, during the past few years, not only "Arendt detractors," but also a few sympathetic scholars have begun to take her self-presentations with a pinch of salt and to modify the prevailing view of Arendt's thought as an "eclectic bouquet of different ideas developed by an outstanding personality in 'dark times.'"[37] For example, John Kiess asks whether "Arendt's disavowals of tradition [are] based on a rather static conception of tradition," and whether "her own writings effectively model what tradition-based innovation can look like;" for as Kiess points out, in her endeavor to identify the radical novelty in totalitarian evil, she "inadvertently confirms the ongoing relevance of the Augustian account [of evil], belying her own claims about the irrelevance of traditional approaches."[38] More generally, I subscribe to Sandra and Lewis Hichman's assessment that "Arendt approaches politics and the life of the mind from a thoroughly modern phenomenological-

[35] Dana R Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996). Other prominent proponents include Bonnie Honig, Wolfgang Heuer, and Chantal Mouffe; see, for example, Bonnie Honig, "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. Bonnie Honig (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 135–66; Wolfgang Heuer, "Gegenwart Im Nirgendwo: Hannah Arendts Weg in Die Postmoderne," *Merkur*, no. 580 (1997): 596–607; Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London and New York: Verso, 2000); Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).
[36] Hannah Arendt, *Thinking Without a Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953-1975*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2018), 480. Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (San Diego, California; New York; London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1968), 205–6.
[37] Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 5.
[38] John Kiess, *Hannah Arendt and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 5.

existential perspective," and that her eclecticism, or what they refer to as "her many selective borrowings," is framed by this perspective.[39]

But before explaining this further, I survey the literature on Arendt's concept of forgiveness and on other aspects of particular interest from our perspective. Having taken stock of this, I then expand on the aims and research questions, before returning to the literature on Arendt in general, in order to explain how the dissertation is situated vis-à-vis the different "schools" or lines of interpretation in Arendt studies.

A Survey of the Literature

Arendt's Writings on Forgiveness

Arendt's account of forgiveness lies at the intersection between two vast areas of research, namely Arendt studies and forgiveness studies. Although Arendt's chapter on forgiveness in *The Human Condition* is a seminal text in the literature on forgiveness, it does not loom quite so large in Arendt scholarship. In other words, scholars who study Arendt do not pay much attention to her concept of forgiveness, whereas scholars who refer extensively to her concept of forgiveness do not pay much attention to her wider thought.

In the literature on forgiveness, Arendt is construed in relation to current debates on forgiveness. This means that the interpretative framework is provided by other theories of forgiveness, rather than by Arendt's other concepts, the position of forgiveness within her wider thought, or the relevant historical context. Furthermore, it is most often not even the entirety of Arendt's account of forgiveness that is taken into consideration in discussions of forgiveness, but rather isolated, single aspects of it.[40] An additional common feature of this literature is a near-exclusive focus on *The Human Condition*, which obscures the fact that Arendt wrote on, and continuously reinterpreted, forgiveness in a number of other texts. Finally, the possibility that Arendt was using familiar terms to express unfamiliar meanings is not generally contemplated. In sum, despite the countless references to Arendt in the literature on forgiveness, the latter has done little to provide a fuller and more integrated picture of Arendt's reflections on the theme.

Within the field of Arendt scholarship, Arendt's writings on forgiveness have occupied a relatively minor position. With one exception (to which we will return shortly), these writings have been the subject of only brief studies, either articles or small parts of more general

[39] Lewis P Hinchman and Sandra K Hinchman, "Existentialism Politicized: Arendt's Debt to Jaspers," *The Review of Politics* 53, no. 3 (1991): 466.
[40] For an examination of which features of Arendt's account are most widely cited, see Pagani, "Quotable Arendt."

expositions of Arendt's thought.[41] To be sure, Arendt's writings on forgiveness are not underappreciated—to the contrary, most commentators are very sympathetic to them. For instance, Andreas Großmann designates these writings as Arendt's "perhaps most original contribution" to practical philosophy.[42] However, such commentary is brief, and it is not clear how forgiveness is to be situated within her wider political thought, or what role forgiveness might play in politics. According to Ludger Hagedorn, the reason for this is that Arendt failed to develop a political theory of forgiveness.[43] Hagedorn makes this claim with reference to an article by Leif Pullich—an article that merits special mention.

Pullich's contention is that Arendt's concept of forgiveness is apolitical, being rather ethical in nature, and applying only to dyadic relationships. Despite Arendt's conceptualization of forgiveness as a modus of action, it is different to the human condition of action that she terms plurality: while action comes into being before several others (the plurality of people acting in concert), forgiveness is directed to another individual.[44] Thus, in relation to both conventional definitions of politics and Arendt's own definition of the political and political action, it is questionable whether she ever succeeds in outlining a political theory of forgiveness.

Certainly, Pullich's contention—which has passed unnoticed in the Anglophone literature—is remarkable. Indeed, one of the key reasons for which Arendt is so often mentioned in the literature on forgiveness is the fact that she is regarded as a pioneer in identifying the political relevance—or rather, indispensability—of forgiveness. Apart from a few unnoticed comments in the German literature, this has been the assumption of much Arendt scholarship. For instance, the accomplished Arendt-scholar Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, whose analysis of forgiveness in *The Human Condition* stands out as one of the most perceptive, states that Arendt anticipated how forgiveness "would be reevaluated in the post-totalitarian world, not just philosophically, but politically, in action. And this anticipation of hers […] is the crucial aspect to elaborate on when we ask what her understanding of action can offer us now, when both forums for forgiveness and

[41] As to the general expositions, two works pay greater attention to forgiveness: Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters* (Yale University Press, 2008); Marie Luise Knott, *Unlearning with Hannah Arendt*, trans. Nanne Mayer (New York: Other Press, 2013). However, as we shall see, Young-Bruehl bases her reading solely on *The Human Condition*. Knot has some quotations from *Denktagebuch*, but not from Arendt's writings on forgiveness after *The Human Condition*. Moreover, she pays little attention to the "inter-conceptual" character of Arendt's account; see below.
[42] Andreas Großmann, *Hannah Arendts Politische Philosophie* (Universität Gesamthochschule Hagen, 1998), 42.
[43] Ludger Hagedorn, "Verzeihen und Versprechen als 'Mächte' politischen Handelns? Ansätze bei Hannah Arendt," in *Lebenswelt und Politik. Perspektiven der Phänomenologie nach Husserl*, eds. Giovanni Leghissa and Michael Staudigl (Würzburg 2007), 275–292.
[44] Leif Pullich, "Hannah Arendt Über Das Verzeihen," *Journal Phänomenologie,(11)*, 1999, 4–12.

forums for making promises have appeared in unprecedented ways in councils and conventions."[45] Accordingly, as in the literature on forgiveness, Young-Bruehl inscribes Arendt into a discussion of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The exception referred to above is the philosopher Thomas Dürr's monograph *Hannah Arendts Begriff des Verzeihens*.[46] However, its title notwithstanding, Dürr's work is not an exegetic analysis of Arendt's writings on forgiveness. Indeed, Dürr's principal concern is not to recover Arendt's own understanding of forgiveness. Instead, his purpose is to develop a philosophical theory of forgiveness. Dürr thus sets himself a twofold task: first, to solve the problems he identifies in Arendt's conceptualization of forgiveness; second, to elaborate and further develop this "improved" version of Arendt's concept of forgiveness, particularly by adding elements not considered by Arendt. The outcome of this maneuver is Dürr's own Arendt-inspired theory of forgiveness. While Dürr's theory of forgiveness is in my estimation well thought out, it remains ultimately Dürr's theory, not Arendt's.[47] Also, it is noteworthy that Dürr leaves Arendt's *Denktagebuch* unexplored.

Beyond this, if it is generally so that Arendt is both quoted in support of and criticized for many different things, it is especially so when it comes to the readings of her account of forgiveness: in the Arendt and the forgiveness research alike, the interpretations are extraordinarily diverse—even to the point of being complete opposites and mutually exclusive. Frankly, when going through this literature, it is often quite hard to believe that the various authors are interpreting the same text. An illustrative example is the contrast between Sigrid Weigel and H.-J. Schanz' interpretations. According to Weigel, Arendt "normalizes" forgiveness: she makes it ordinary by

[45] Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 96.
[46] Thomas Dürr, *Hannah Arendts Begriff des Verzeihens* (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2009).
[47] Right from the outset, Dürr leaves Arendt behind, taking as his point of departure the criticism of Arendt's concept of action put forward by Seyla Benhabib (among others), namely that it is exclusively political and public. Applying this criticism to Arendt's concept of forgiveness, Dürr sets out to outline an adjusted Arendtian concept of forgiveness, one which includes non-political and private action. In so doing, Dürr is interested in what he calls Arendt's general [*allgemein*]—as distinguished from her exclusively political—concepts of action and forgiveness. This is quite a remarkable venture, considering that action in Arendt's conceptualization is "the political activity par excellence;" and with regard to forgiveness, it clearly goes against the thrust of Arendt's argument. Furthermore, as we shall see, Arendt does not claim that forgiveness is always an action (in her technical use of the term); it is only in the political context that she focuses on forgiveness as a modus of action. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 9, 241. Moreover, in order to address the problem as to how Arendt's account of forgiveness can be politically realized, Dürr suggests leaving aside the tension in Arendt's account between the plurality of action and the individual relationship of forgiveness (as identified by Pullich), simply by assuming that forgiveness concerns individual relationships—and that it is possible to apply this to collective subjects. Evidently, this is far from Arendt's way of thinking about politics as well as her idea of forgiveness as the remedy for the damages occurring when people act in concert, not to mention her general hostility to collective subjects.

linking it solely to everyday action and by disconnecting it from intentional evil per se. Schanz, in turn, criticizes Arendt for understanding forgiveness as something purely extraordinary—for expelling everyday aspects from it, hence neglecting that forgiveness is not always of a "deep, existential kind."[48]

In this example, the contrast in interpretations can be explained by what I suggest is a fundamental tension or contrast in Arendt's account between the limited forgiveness scope and the extraordinary qualities she ascribes to forgiveness. As we shall see, there is much tension in Arendt's account, and that may be part of the explanation why the readings are so extraordinarily diverse. Another likely explanatory factor is that Arendt's use of familiar terms in technical—and often delimited—definitions is especially challenging when it comes to forgiveness, given that forgiveness is so "connotatively overloaded" and carries such a heavy pre-understanding.[49] Needless to say, it is in Western culture primarily a matter of Christian connotations. The interpretive challenge of keeping to Arendt's definition of forgiveness and what she actually writes is therefore further challenged by her peculiar way of employing Jesus and the New Testament. Yet whatever the reasons, the result is an extraordinarily elusive and confusing picture of Arendt's thinking on forgiveness.

Arendt's Response to Heidegger's Existential Phenomenology

As indicated in the prelude, Arendt's affair with Heidegger and the fact that she resumed contact with him after the war are controversial issues—even scandalous, according to some critics. Since these biographical facts did not become widely known until recently, this has been, as it were, a "retrospective scandal." [50] Taking place primarily in American academia during the mid-1990s, this so-called "Arendt scandal" was heated and personal, fueled also by the bitter and highly politicized (and still ongoing) controversy over Arendt's book on Eichmann. Indeed, rather than being based on critical discussions of Arendt's work, it was characterized by *ad hominem* attacks: Arendt's lack of sound judgement in resuming contact with Heidegger was used to undermine her integrity and

[48] Hans-Jørgen Schanz, *Handling og ondskab: en bog om Hannah Arendt* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2007), 50. Sigrid Weigel, "Secularization and Sacralization, Normalization and Rupture: Kristeva and Arendt on Forgiveness," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 2002, 320–23.

[49] If philosophers generally hold a fondness for neologisms (with Heidegger as the most notorious example), it was not something Arendt subscribed to (with the notable exception of her notion of natality)—even though her (re)definitions of familiar terms could in fact have justified it.

[50] Their affair did not become widely known until the 1982 publication of what remains the standard biography of Arendt: Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*. The controversy arose in the mid-1990s, following Elżbieta Ettinger's disputed *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

authority, and to present her as a starry-eyed disciple, under the spell of the so-called "magician from Messkirch;"[51] or, in the words of Richard Wolin, a "non-Jewish Jew" and "child" of Heidegger.[52] Similarly, it was also used as an interpretive tool for criticizing Arendt's work: establishing "guilt by association," as Dana Villa has put it, Arendt was interpreted as a Heideggerian proponent of a dubious kind of political existentialism and vitalism, as commonly associated with notorious Nazi or right-wing intellectuals such as Alfred Bäumler, Carl Schmitt, and Ernst Jünger.[53]

While Arendt was arguably too soft regarding Heidegger's political misdeeds, drawing too neat a distinction between his work and his political views and behavior, it is simply wrong to claim that she was altogether uncritical of his thought. This is evident from the studies that have focused on the relation between Arendt's and Heidegger's work. As these studies have shown, Arendt did not merely adopt Heideggerian motifs, but also critically transformed them through her signature concepts of action and plurality.[54] In other words, she transmuted and adapted them to her intersubjective account of the political. As I will explain shortly, Arendt's response to Heidegger's concept of guilt testifies to her critical and transformative approach to Heidegger's thought more generally.

In these studies of the intellectual relationship between Arendt and Heidegger, there are, however, some surprisingly large lacunas. First, and perhaps most strikingly, one of the richest sources has been ignored: Arendt's *Denktagebuch*.[55] Whereas Arendt's engagement with Heidegger in her published work is largely implicit, her *Denktagebuch* contains some 60 entries with explicit references to Heidegger—including his notion of guilt. Second, in her copies of Heidegger's works, Arendt made numerous highlights and annotations. As we will see, this is especially the case with the chapters on guilt in *Being and Time*: they are filled with disapproving comments and exclamation marks. While Arendt also briefly deals with (or, more precisely, criticizes) Heidegger's notion of guilt in her published writings, it has attracted surprisingly little attention that Heidegger

[51] Karl Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, ed. Richard Wolin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 4.
[52] Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 1.
[53] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 115.
[54] In addition to the two distinguished monographs by Dana Villa and Jacques Taminiaux, the contributions of Seyla Benhabib, Richard Bernstein, and Sophie Loidolt merit particular mention: Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*; Jacques Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger* (SUNY Press, 1997) (French orig. from 1992); Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism of Arendt*; Richard J Bernstein, "Provocation and Appropriation: Hannah Arendt's Response to Martin Heidegger," *Constellations* 4, no. 2 (1997): 153–71; Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*.
[55] In the description of the sources below, I explain what kind of document this is.

constitutes an important part of the polemical context for her reflections on guilt and responsibility.[56] Indeed, her *Denktagebuch* and her marginalia in *Being and Time* testify to this importance. Third, apart from the matter of unused sources, there is an aspect of Heidegger's thought that is curiously absent from the literature: his engagement with theological sources and his intense collaboration with Rudolf Bultmann.[57]

This absence is curious, not least because Arendt entered university as a student of Protestant theology and became, as her friend and fellow student, Hans Jonas, recalls, "a terrific student of Bultmann […]. [S]he had such an intense interest in the New Testament that she spent several semesters studying with him."[58] With regard to the themes of this dissertation, it is of particular interest that in developing the ontological concept of *Schuld* [guilt or debt][59] in *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger engaged intensively, as Judith Wolfe has made clear, with the issue of sin—one example being that in a 1924 seminar series co-organized with Bultmann, he lectured on "The Problem of Sin in Luther."[60] This lecture reflects Heidegger's account in *Being and Time,* in which he rejects "grace as the appropriate horizon within which to interpret sin" in favor of "a horizon of nothingness."[61] According to this account, there is no room for forgiveness, nor prospect of redemption: authentic existence is premised on "an unflinching acceptance of the ultimacy of death and the irremovability of guilt."[62]

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[56] A noteworthy exception, though, is, as we shall see, Arne Johan Vetlesen, "Hannah Arendt on Conscience and Evil," Philosophy & Social Criticism 27, no. 5 (2001): 1–33. One may wonder why Arendt's critical engagement with Heidegger's notion of guilt has been neglected both in the literature on Arendt's debt to Heidegger and in the voluminous literature on Arendt's writings on guilt and responsibility. One likely reason is that whereas her engagement with Heideggerian guilt is purely abstract, she discusses the issues of guilt and responsibility more concretely, and more controversially, in her reflections on totalitarian crimes. Arendt's published criticism of Heidegger's notion of guilt is primarily to be found in a subchapter of *The Life of the Mind,* volume 2.

[57] As we shall see in chapter 1, this neglect even extends to a recent monograph devoted to the theological aspects of Arendt's thinking: Kiess, *Hannah Arendt and Theology*.

[58] Hans Jonas, *Memoirs*, trans. Krishna Winston (Waltham, Mass.; Hanover; London: Brandeis University Press : University Press of New England, 2008), 61.

[59] Notably, the German word *Schuld* can mean both guilt (culpability; being responsible for a deed) and debt (owing somebody something, as in a debtor-creditor relationship). The latter meaning is key to Heidegger's individual conception of guilt; as Arendt summarizes it in *Denktagebuc*h under the heading "the original debt [die ursprüngliche Schuld]": "Since I have not made myself, I owe my Dasein, I am a debtor." Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 815; undated entry. "Da ich mich nicht selbst gemacht habe, schulde ich mein Dasein, ich bin ein Schuldner."

[60] Judith Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology: Theological Horizons in Martin Heidegger's Early Work* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2013).

[61] Wolfe, 127.

[62] Judith Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2001), 61.

Defining the Exploration

Rather than being based on one overall argument, this dissertation is thematically guided. In what follows, I specify and expand upon what I defined as the overall purpose—to draw a fuller and more integrated picture of Arendt's thinking on forgiveness—and explain how I intend to achieve this.

For one thing, I set out to establish how Arendt's account of forgiveness and *trespassing* compares to Heidegger's ontological notion of *Schuld* [guilt or debt][63] and his vision of intersubjectivity, as expressed in *Being and Time* through use of the ontological notions of in *Being and Time*, as expressed in his ontological notions of *Mitsein*, and *Mitwelt* ["Being-with" and "with-world"].[64] Deeming Heidegger's intersubjective ambitions defective, Arendt's basic take on Heideggerian motifs was, as already mentioned, a combination of criticism and transformative appropriation in which she politicized and "intersubjectified" Heideggerian categories. Although the beginning of Arendt's criticism is generally taken to be an essay of 1946,[65] Moyn has argued that it dates back to Arendt's dissertation, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin* [*The Concept of Love in Augustine*] (submitted in 1928 and published in 1929). Moyn's suggestion, then, is that Arendt contributed to the "controversy over intersubjectivity."

Sparked by Heidegger's "dismissal of public engagement and ethical analysis from the ontological realm,"[66] this controversy related to Heidegger's claim of having overcome the subjectivist and solipsist biases of the Western philosophical and theological tradition. Indeed, his notion of Mitsein "proved perhaps the most controversial topic of debate" in the development of phenomenology in interwar Germany, and "certainly among Heidegger's students."[67] Among his students, it would become a common feature not simply to reject Heidegger's enterprise, but rather to set out to "think with Heidegger against Heidegger."[68] On Moyn's reading, Arendt was (along with Karl Löwith) the first to do so. Like other participants in the controversy, a pressure point for Arendt was Heidegger's notion of Mitsein; for although Heidegger declared his so-called

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[63] As noted above, it is crucial to bear in mind the double semantic of *Schuld* when dealing with Heidegger. I have therefore chosen to adopt the German term.
[64] As we shall see, there are other cognate "with-notions," such as *Mitdasein* ["Dasein-with"] and *Miteinandersein* ["being-with-one-another"].
[65] Hannah Arendt, "What Is Existenz Philosophy?," *Partisan Review* 13 (1946): 34–56.
[66] Michael D Gubser, *The Far Reaches: Phenomenology, Ethics, and Social Renewal in Central Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 5.
[67] Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 57.
[68] It was Habermas who coined this phrase; see Jürgen Habermas, "Mit Heidegger Gegen Heidegger Denken," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 25 (1953): 53.

"fundamental ontology" to be of a non-ethical and purely descriptive nature, his account of Mitsein was ambiguous: it constitutes, as Peter Probst notes, "Jene Stelle im System Heideggers, an der sowohl der Mangel einer Ethik spürbar wird als auch die Basis für einschlägige Überlegungen gegeben ist."[69]

Now, while accepting Moyn's proposal that Arendt had already begun "wrestling" with Heidegger's vision of intersubjectivity in her dissertation, my contention is, as I will spell out in the opening chapter, that she did so in a manner fundamentally different to that which Moyn suggests. In short, Moyn argues that "Arendt appealed to a philosopher [Augustine] who maintained the importance […] of being otherworldly in the world," thereby "attempt[ing] to find a deeper matrix for selfhood in a prior intersubjectivity." Her rejoinder to Heidegger was thus a "crypto-theological ethics" of the other predicated on a "surreptitious reliance on theology"—a reliance she would later dismiss as she "turned to the secular."[70] However, pointing out that Arendt rejected the belief that a God-self relation can be regarded as a "prior intersubjectivity," I suggest that rather than "deploy[ing] Augustine against Heidegger," she in fact criticized Heidegger by criticizing Augustine, accusing them both of solipsism.

Moreover, I contend that Arendt's criticism of Augustine's notion of original sin also represented a dig against Heidegger's ontological notion of *Schuld*, or "*die ursprüngliche Schuld* [the original debt], as Arendt called it in *Denktagebuch*.[71] By the same token, it also paralleled her famous post-war criticism of indiscriminate notions of collective guilt. An analysis of her less well-known criticism of Augustine's notion of sin can thus provide a basis for evaluating her stark claims regarding the irrelevance of tradition to an understanding of totalitarian guilt. It also serves to call into question the habitual characterization of her youthful studies as "unworldly" and irrelevant to her later political thought.[72] Furthermore, I suggest that Arendt's criticism of Augustine and Heidegger's ontologizing of sin and *Schuld* was connected to her "solipsism charge." As we shall see, the Heideggerian way to authentic *Selbstsein* ["being-one's-self"] and *mineness* [*Jemeinigkeit*] proceeds through "the call of conscience [*der Ruf des Gewissens*]" to acknowledging one's being-

[69] Peter Probst, "Mitsein," *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie online* (Schwabe Verlag, 2017), https://doi.org/10.24894/HWPh.2547.
[70] Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 78, 83, 84; Samuel Moyn, "Hannah Arendt on the Secular," *New German Critique* 35, no. 3 (105) (2008): 71. This means that although Moyn's interpretation is revisionist in arguing that Arendt's critical engagement with Heidegger had already begun in her dissertation, he still subscribes to the standard reading of the young Arendt as "unworldly."
[71] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 815; undated entry.
[72] I return to this "standard narrative" below.

guilty [*Schuldig-sein*]. For now, it suffices to say that this is a solitary and "desocializing" undertaking; as Karl Löwith objected, the solipsism Heidegger sought to overcome with his concept of Mitsein solipsism "reappears" or remains in the guise of *Selbstsein* and *mineness*.[73] In this regard, it is significant that Arendt's criticism predated Heidegger's Nazi involvement; for, if the controversy over intersubjectivity was sparked by the professedly non-ethical status of Heidegger's account, his Nazism of course compounded the matter, raising the question as to what extent his political views and conduct reflected political and ethical shortcomings in his philosophy. Needless to say, this was particularly true for Heidegger's numerous Jewish students.[74]

Beyond this, I contend that in considering Arendt's role in the "controversy over intersubjectivity," one should take into account the overlooked fact that there was an equally early—or even earlier—responder to Heidegger's account of Mitsein, namely Bultmann. Seeking to unfold its ethical potential, Bultmann took Mitsein as the point of departure for moral considerations centering on neighborly love—this being the focal point of Arendt's dissertation. What is more, he also engaged with Heidegger's account of *Schuld*. Last but certainly not least, in his 1926 book *Jesus* (which Arendt had a copy of filled with marginalia and underlinings), Bultmann concluded with a chapter on forgiveness. Most notably, in attempting to combine Heideggerian existential-phenomenological analysis with Lutheran exegesis, Bultmann carried out what he presented as an I-Thou analysis of forgiveness in strictly human terms, that is, one in which human-to-human forgiveness is not construed in terms of a mediation by God as a third party.

Second, the aim of offering a fuller and more integrated interpretation of Arendt's thinking on forgiveness requires recognition of the fact that she continuously changes her mind on the matter. Indeed, this means that there is not only one concept of forgiveness in her thought, but rather several. I intend, therefore, to explore the changing nature of her conception of forgiveness, to trace its development, and to specify how and when she alters it. In elucidating the genealogy of her conception of forgiveness, Arendt's *Denktagebuch* is a key document—not to mention an under-utilized one—that sheds new light on her take on forgiveness.[75] Indeed, it is formative to her thinking on forgiveness; for while Arendt continuously reinterprets forgiveness, her most profound

[73] Karl Löwith, *Das Individuum in der Rolle des Mitmenschen* (München: Drei Masken, 1928). See also Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 70–77.
[74] In addition to Arendt, Heidegger's Jewish students included Leo Strauss, Hans Jonas, Emmanuel Levinas, Herbert Marcuse, and Arendt's first husband, Günther Anders (born Günther Siegmund Stern), to mention only the most famous.
[75] In the description of the sources below, I explain what kind of document this is.

change of mind is to be found in *Denktagebuch*: in entries from 1950 to 1953, she makes a "conceptual U-turn," going from opposing to promoting forgiveness. Likewise, she here develops several ideas fundamental to her later, more famous account in *The Human Condition*. Notably, her positive view of forgiveness is connected to, and dependent on, a different view as to what forgiveness is. In other words, what she begins to recommend is not identical to what she had previously rejected. Essentially, her change of mind is contingent upon a political-intersubjective reinterpretation: namely, that she begins to see forgiveness and the correlating notion of guilt as genuinely political-intersubjective phenomena.

After the publication of *The Human Condition* in 1958, Arendt continued to ponder the question of forgiveness. Between mid-1959 and early 1960, she discussed the matter with the great Anglo-American poet and critic W.H. Auden. As evidenced in a letter that Arendt sent to Auden on February 14, 1960, they deliberated on questions such as: how does forgiveness relate to judicial pardon and to neighborly love; is there, as in law, "equality before forgiveness," or does forgiveness rather discriminate; what is the relationship between the person and the deed, between the wrongdoer and the wrong?[76] Remarkably, it has not been noticed that when the German version of *The Human Condition, Vita Activa oder Vom tätigen Leben,* came out later in 1960, Arendt had made a number of changes and additions to the chapter on forgiveness—and that these changes reflected her discussion with Auden. Although these alterations were certainly not as profound as the reflections in *Denktagebuch*, I contend that they are nonetheless noteworthy. Furthermore, I suggest that Arendt's essay of 1966 on Bertolt Brecht can be read as an elaboration on some of the new ideas that she had introduced in *Vita Activa*, and particularly her claim that forgiveness discriminates. Stating that poets tend to go astray politically, Arendt controversially contended that "they cannot bear as much responsibility as others must," but should rather be granted "a certain latitude."[77] Finally, Arendt reflects on forgiveness in two series of lectures: "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy" (1965) and "Basic Moral Propositions" (1966). These manuscripts are highly

[76] Hannah Arendt, "Arendt letter to Auden (14 February 1960)," The Hannah Arendt Papers at the Library of Congress, General Correspondence 1938-1976, (Series: Correspondence File, 1938-1976, n.d.). For Auden's review of *The Human Condition* and his reflections on forgiveness, see W. H. Auden, "Thinking What We Are Doing," *Encounter*, June 1959, 72–76; W. H. Auden, "The Fallen City. Some Reflections on Shakespeare's Henry IV," *Encounter*, November 1959, 21–31.

[77] Hannah Arendt, "What Is Permitted to Jove," *New Yorker* 5 (1966): 68–122; see also; Hannah Arendt, "Quod Licet Jovi... Reflexionen Über Den Dichter Bertolt Brecht Und Sein Verhältnis Zur Politik," *Merkur* 23, no. 6 (1969): 527–42, 625–42. Adding notes to her essay from *The New Yorker*, Arendt included it in Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 207–49. I refer to the latter essay, as reprinted in Hannah Arendt, "What Is Permitted to Jove…: Reflections on the Poet Bertolt Brecht and His Relation to Politics," in *Reflections on Literature and Culture. Hannah Arendt*, ed. Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 223–57.

interesting, because Arendt contemplates and reinterprets forgiveness in light of the provocative notions of "the banality of evil" and "thoughtlessness" that she had introduced a few years earlier in her book on Eichmann. And, whereas Arendt in the vast majority of her writings reflects on forgiveness within the framework of her theory of action, she here considers forgiveness with reference to the relationship between thinking and ethics—on the possible ethical implications of thinking, as opposed to what she saw as Eichmann's "thoughtlessness."

As already indicated, a third important task is to examine the place and role of Arendt's account of forgiveness within her thought as a whole. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate that the full interrelatedness of Arendt's concepts, as well as her often highly individuated definitions of them, have not yet been fully understood. As Margaret Canovan observes, Arendt's thinking characteristically takes "the form of a set of complex and interrelated trains of thought," linked together within a "spider's web of concepts."[78] In other words, Arendt's various concepts are interwoven and complementary. This means that one cannot understand one aspect of her thought—such as forgiveness—without considering how it is connected to other aspects of her thought. This may sound like stating the obvious: however, as Canovan indicates, it is especially important in Arendt's case. As H.-J. Schanz similarly remarks, Arendt's "thinking is such that her basic concepts and ideas refer to each other within a dense network." Accordingly, Arendt's concepts, if left to stand alone and read in isolation, tend to appear as "ill thought-out and banal—whereas they gain weight and pregnancy when resituated into their wider conceptual contexts."[79]

For a study of Arendt's concept of forgiveness, this means considering not only the conceptual landscape specific to forgiveness, but also the nexus of concepts relating to Arendt's singular understanding of action.[80] What I hope to contribute to the existing literature is not so much an appreciation of the fact that Arendt's concept of action is situated within a web of other concepts—this is by now a well-established line of interpretation–but rather an understanding of

[78] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 6.
[79] Hans-Jørgen Schanz, *Handling og ondskab: en bog om Hannah Arendt* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2007), 13 & 18. As to the latter, it should be noted that while Arendt's concept of forgiveness ought to be read "inter-conceptually," this does not merely result in "inter-conceptual synergy." As we shall see, an inter-conceptual reading also brings to light and accentuates many problematic aspects.
[80] Whereas the scholarly literature on forgiveness often defines forgiveness negatively, in terms of what forgiveness is not, Arendt shows little interest in differentiating forgiveness from adjacent concepts (such as reconciliation, condonation, excuse, and pardon).

what the conceptual interrelatedness of action implies for and adds to our understanding of Arendt's concept of forgiveness.[81].

Fourth, as already stated, I believe that in order to adequately explore Arendt's interpretation(s) of forgiveness, one needs to consider her notion(s) of guilt. More specifically, my contention is that there is need for a comparison of her thinking on forgiveness with 1) her writings on guilt and responsibility; 2) her conception of guilt in her theory of action and forgiveness, as presented in *The Human Condition*. Several things add to the significance of undertaking such comparisons. For one, in her writings on guilt and responsibility, Arendt insists that guilt, unlike responsibility, cannot be a political or collective concept. As we shall see, her distinction between guilt and responsibility is the key argumentative tool in her endeavors, on the one hand, to back away from collective guilt while, on the other hand, to avoid ending up in sheer individualism. But how does this compare to her claim regarding the political significance of forgiveness? The critical question is whether a political concept of forgiveness presupposes a political concept of guilt. Attending to Arendt's notion of guilt, or what she terms *trespassing*, in her theory of action and forgiveness, I consider the question of whether she here advances a political concept of guilt.

Because this inquiry into Arendt's conception of guilt follows from the primary aim of exploring her reflections on forgiveness, the principal question remains that of how Arendt construes guilt in her writings on forgiveness. That is, Arendt's writings on guilt and responsibility will mainly be taken into consideration so as to illuminate her notion of *trespassing*. Such a comparison is particularly revealing, I suggest, in that it evinces tension: whereas Arendt insisted that guilt "always singles out" (hence her dictum that if "all are guilty, nobody is"), her account of *trespassing* is strikingly different.[82] Resulting from the spontaneous, unpredictable character of action, as well as from the fact that one acts into a plurality in which other humans also act, *trespassing* is, according to Arendt, inevitable: "he who acts never quite knows what he is doing, […] he always becomes 'guilty' of consequences he never intended or even foresaw."[83]

These striking claims prompt questions such as: in what sense, if any, can *trespassing* be rendered as guilt? Is *trespassing* compatible with Arendt's interpretation of guilt, and with the

[81] Hans-Jørgen Schanz, *Handling og ondskab: en bog om Hannah Arendt* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2007), 13 & 18. As to the latter, it should be noted that while it applies to Arendt's concept of forgiveness that it is to be read "inter-conceptually," this does not only result in "inter-conceptual synergy," that is, it does not only gain by being inter-conceptually construed. As we shall see, an inter-conceptual reading also brings to light and accentuates some problematic aspects about it.
[82] Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," 2003, 28.
[83] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 233.

assumptions about agency and accountability that underlie conventional conceptions of guilt? Furthermore, these questions have consequences for an assessment of Arendt's account of forgiveness as a political act, since this, on her analysis, is directed to agents of *trespassing*. If, as these quotations seem to indicate, it is a matter of forgiving a person for something that s/he could not have known, nor "intended," nor "even foresaw," does this not then amount to "forgiving the excusable"? In other words, does this not absolve the agent, the *trespasser*, of blame? And if so, is Arendt's celebrated account of forgiveness effectively a form of excuse?

Finally, another central objective of this dissertation is to ponder the question of whether Arendt's concept of forgiveness conforms to her vision of political intersubjectivity. As outlined in the literature review above, there is a debate (albeit only in German, and involving very few participants) as to whether Arendt conceives of forgiveness as a dyadic / bilateral relation, something that would imply that forgiveness forms an exception to Arendt's "multilateral" conception of action and plurality, that is, to her political version of intersubjectivity. I would add that in order to assess the political status of Arendt's concept of forgiveness, one also needs to allow for the fact that after *The Human Condition*, she begins to argue that forgiveness discriminates. I will therefore address the additional question of whether "the inequality of forgiveness" is compatible with Arendt's conception of the political, and particularly with her distinction between (natural) sameness and political equality, which she holds to be an "equality of unequals."[84] Furthermore, since forgiveness for Arendt correlates with *trespassing*, I will similarly address the question as to whether *trespassing* conforms to her notion of political intersubjectivity. What is more, since Arendt's notion of "the political" is distinct from any conventional notion of politics, it is worth pointing out that I measure her concepts of forgiveness and *trespassing* against her own idiosyncratic politics. While this is the primary objective, I will, however, also put the results of this inquiry into a wider perspective, measuring Arendt's account of forgiveness against more conventional notions of politics, as conceived in contemporary political-philosophical theories of forgiveness, and consider whether "Arendtian forgiveness" can be institutionalized. For although this dissertation is intended as a contribution to Arendt scholarship, a fuller understanding of Arendt's thinking on forgiveness might also make a contribution to forgiveness research. I suggest that such a contribution would mainly be a cautionary one, serving to moderate some of the uses of Arendt that are current in the contemporary literature on forgiveness. I will, however, also consider constructively what Arendt might contribute to the contemporary literature on forgiveness.

[84] Arendt, 215.

Method, Approach, and Situating the Dissertation within Arendt Studies

It would be no exaggeration to say that intellectual historians belong to the branches of academics who quarrel the most about methodology. Indeed, as Peter Gordon observes, "[b]ecause intellectual historians are likely to disagree about the most fundamental premises of what they do, any one definition of intellectual history is bound to provoke controversy."[85] To be sure, some proponents of the so-called "Cambridge School" regard their version of historicist contextualism as at least paradigmatic, if not the only permissible way of practicing intellectual history. At the other end of the spectrum, one of the most prominent representatives of a more philosophically engaged way of doing intellectual history, Martin Jay, declares that he does not have a method at all and that he is "opposed to developing a replicable method."[86] In a similar vein, Schanz denies that there is any such thing as a general intellectual-historical methodology, adding that if there were one, "we should abandon it out of fear of becoming too predictable." Criticizing what he refers to as "pre-structured […] narrow and problem-blind 'methodological' approaches," he contends that "if there is one thing" intellectual history should be, it is simply "to be generous." In other words, intellectual history should be "anarchistic;" if it is not, then it will "petrify into the sad destiny of [becoming] just another academic specialization like all the others."[87]

Rather than entering into a lengthy discussion of the identity of intellectual history, I will simply state and make explicit what I intend to do. However, I should first note that while Schanz might tend to contradict the generous spirit that he himself preaches, I nonetheless agree

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[85] Peter E. Gordon, "What Is Intellectual History," accessed July 26, 2019, https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/harvardcolloquium/pages/what-intellectual-history. As Gordon also notes, intellectual history "is an unusual discipline, eclectic in both method and subject matter and therefore resistant to any single, globalized definition."

[86] Warren Breckman et al., eds., "Ten Questions for Martin Jay," in *The Modernist Imagination*, Intellectual History and Critical Theory (Berghahn Books, 2009), 390. For his criticism of Quentin Skinner and the Cambridge School, see Martin Jay, "Historical Explanation and the Event: Reflections on the Limits of Contextualization," *New Literary History* 42, no. 4 (2011): 557–71; Martin Jay, "Intention and Irony: The Missed Encounter between Hayden White and Quentin Skinner," *History and Theory* 52, no. 1 (2013): 32–48; Martin Jay, "Martin Jay: An Encounter between Philosophy and History," *Revista de Ciencia Política* 36, no. 1 (2016): 383–92.

[87] Drawing attention to the fact that the history of ideas as a genre is way older than it is as university discipline, Schanz adds: "Since the history of ideas as a discipline inherits an extremely broad genre the discipline needs to be inclusive in a way that no other university discipline is. If not, one could just make a sub-disciplinary study of a history of ideas bent within already existing disciplines. But then the interdisciplinarity […] would be lost." Hans-Jørgen Schanz, "Intellectual History: Five Questions," in *Intellectual History: Five Questions*, ed. Mikkel Thorup, Frederik Stjernfelt, and Jeppesen Morten Haugaard (Copenhagen: Automatic Press, 2013), 149–51. On the development of intellectual history as a discipline, see also Leo Catana, "Intellectual History and the History of Philosophy: Their Genesis and Current Relationship," in *A Companion To Intellectual History*, ed. Georgina M. Montgomery and Mark A. Largent (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 129–40.

that intellectual history should be generous and inclusive, not least in allowing for interdisciplinarity.[88] From this point of view, a lack of consensus might actually be seen as an advantage, as a guarantor for pluralism that favors intellectual creativity. It goes without saying that certain approaches and methods may be better suited to certain *Erkenntnisinteressen* and to certain subjects.

To be clear, I do not aim at a comprehensive historical reconstruction (if such a thing is even possible); instead, my objective is the more modest one of offering some intellectual-historical perspectives that add to our understanding of Arendt's thinking on forgiveness. By the same token, rather than seeking to establish an overall "holistic" context, I focus instead on more limited and immediate contexts.[89]

More concretely, although I address Arendt's postwar correspondence with Jaspers regarding guilt, responsibility, and the Nuremberg Trials, as well as her discussion about forgiveness with Auden, I will focus mainly on the context of Arendt's studies in Weimar Germany. I will also consider Arendt's later writings from this perspective. I do not mean to deny that Arendt's experience as a stateless refugee and her reflections on totalitarianism played a profound role in her thought; rather, I wish to supplement the vast literature on these subjects, and to suggest that Arendt's reflections were also shaped by her early work and studies—rather than there being a

[88] Cf. Warren Breckman, "Intellectual History and the Interdisciplinary Ideal," in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, ed. Darrin M McMahon and Samuel Moyn (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 275–94. Furthermore, Gordon makes another important observation: "Over the past half century, the contextualist imperative has done a great service to intellectual history by deepening its capacities for methodological self-consciousness, but it has also had the unfortunate effect of erecting a barrier against philosophy and political theory (alongside other modes of criticism). The implicit proposal of this essay is that this barrier be dismantled and that we reimagine intellectual history less as a distinctive discipline and more as the eclectic practice that Warren Breckman […] calls a 'rendezvous discipline,' that is, a trading zone among the disciplines that could serve as a space for the flourishing of historically informed criticism. This more creative if less definitive understanding of intellectual history might permit us to relax some of the strictures that have gained authority in the field thanks to an overzealous ethic of disciplinary professionalism and technical rationality. And it would embolden us to defend the practice of open thinking in a social order that seems ever more determined to bring it to an end." Peter E Gordon, "Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas," in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, 52. As to "erecting a barrier against philosophy," see also Frederick Beiser, "History of Ideas: A Defense," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology*, ed. Cappelen Cappelen, Tamar Szabó Gendler, and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 505–24; Darrin M McMahon, "The Return of the History of Ideas," in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Darrin M McMahon (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13–31.

[89] The former, a holistic context, is implied by Skinner's programmatic contextualism, as Gordon points out: "Skinner's contextualism seems to presuppose an implausibly holist view of cultural meaning, i.e., that for every idea, there just is one, pregiven context that must be described, with the happy consequence that ideas seem to be fixed entirely within self-contained but objectively identifiable spheres of significance. This presupposition seems to neglect the obvious fragmentation or disunity within linguistic contexts, and it also resorts (implicitly) to a spurious objectivism about the identification of contexts, as if the historian's choice of linguistic context were a matter of brute empiricism rather than interpretation." Gordon, "What Is Intellectual History." See also Gordon, "Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas."

simple contrast between the former and the latter, as the "standard reading" has it.[90] Indeed, in the existing literature, reading Arendt from the beginning is certainly the exception rather than the rule, and the theological element of her studies and intellectual environment—including the theological aspects of Heidegger's work and his intensive collaboration with Bultmann—has been very little studied.

Reading Arendt from the beginning and tracing the development of her thinking imply chronological reasoning.[91] There are, of course, numerous approaches to mapping conceptual change. However, this dissertation will provide a reading of an author and a concept (or, more precisely, a nexus of concepts); so, rather than being an investigation into conceptual change (however defined), it can more adequately be described as a thematically guided study of authorship. But apart from being chronological, what is the approach to Arendt's writings; what is the reading strategy?

An important part of the approach to Arendt's concept of forgiveness has already been stated and justified: that it is to be read "inter-conceptually," because of the interwoven and complementary character of Arendt's concepts. However, while Arendt was without doubt systematically minded, she was at the same time wary of intellectual "system building." In keeping with existential phenomenology's emphasis on lived experience, she insisted that "if we lose ground of experience then we get into all kinds of theories. When the political theorist begins to build his systems, he is also usually dealing with abstraction."[92] In addition, she stressed the tentative and flexible nature of thinking. Having a "self-destructive tendency," the latter unceasingly unravels its own constructions.[93] Thus, as Canovan points out, although Arendt's thinking "took the form of a set of complex and interrelated trains of thought, in the course of which she did indeed establish a great many settled positions, firm conceptual distinctions and interconnected commitments," it ultimately remained "open-ended and incomplete" (a fact that also reflects, one might add, that Arendt was much more concerned with the conception and "launching" of her ideas than with

[90] As I will discuss at greater length, the standard narrative is one of conversion: that Arendt's experience with Nazism led her to turn her back on her allegedly "unworldly" youth.
[91] Naturally, this does not rule out examinations of back-and-forth thought developments. More generally, the function genealogical reasoning is, of course, to detect changes in and trace the development of Arendt's thinking. This means that in cases where Arendt expresses the same idea, I will refer to texts from different periods.
[92] Melvyn A. Hill and Hannah Arendt, *Hannah Arendt: the recovery of the public world* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 308. See also her exclamation (on the same page): "What is the subject of thought? Experience! Nothing else."
[93] Hannah Arendt, *Life of the mind*. Vol. I: *Thinking* (New York: Harc.Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 88. See also Hill and Arendt, *Recovery of the Public World,* 338; Hannah Arendt, "Martin Heidegger At 80," *New York Review of Books*, 17/6, (Oct. 21, 1971), 50–54; repr. in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* ed. M. Murray (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 293–303.

carefully working them out).[94] The approach that Canovan proposes—and which I adopt—is to identify Arendt's clusters of concepts, to trace their origins, and to follow their development in her writings, and then to situate single concepts or aspects within these trains of thought. In short, to "follow the windings and trace the interconnectedness of her thinking."[95]

While I adopt Canovan's reading strategy, I disagree with her about how to implement it. In Canovan's analysis, Arendt's reflections on totalitarianism constitute, as already mentioned, an interpretive ground zero, from which all Arendt's "thought trains" and "virtually [her] entire agenda" proceed. While acknowledging the importance of Canovan's work, I contend that in order to fully carry out Canovan's reading strategy, one must also consider Arendt's earliest work, as well as her intellectual formation as a university student in Weimar Germany.[96] Canovan claims that such considerations are irrelevant to Arendt's political thought, since she was "immersed in intellectual interests of a peculiar unworldly kind," studying Protestant theology and thinkers such as Kierkegaard and Augustine.[97] It was not until the rise of Nazism, Canovan contends, that Arendt became politically aware, leading her to react against "all forms of unworldliness"—including her own "life as an unpolitical intellectual studying antipolitical theology"—"in favor of commitment to political responsibility."[98]

This is indeed the standard interpretation: that Arendt had what Samuel Moyn calls a "youthful flirtation" with theology, before she later "turned to the secular."[99] However, although the political crises of mid-century were certainly crucial, this kind of interpretation conceals more than it reveals. Thus, I agree with Seyla Benhabib that

> the recovery of the public world of politics in her thought was not only a political project but a philosophical one as well. Arendt herself, as well as her political commentators, have failed to note the *philosophical significance* of her search for the recovery of the public world. […] [I]n her transformation of the Heideggerian concept of the 'world,' Arendt restored 'being-in-the-world-with' […] to the center of our experience of worldliness.[100]

However, assuming that Arendt's philosophical project was not conceived until after her political awakening, Benhabib leaves Arendt's earliest work out of consideration. In contrast, I demonstrate

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[94] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 6.
[95] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 12. To be sure, Canovan writes very little on forgiveness—in fact, it is arguably a shortcoming of her distinguished work. Hence, it is not her interpretation of Arendt's writings on forgiveness that will serve as a model; instead, the idea is to apply Canovan's reading strategy to Arendt's writings on forgiveness.
[96] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 7.
[97] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 8.
[98] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 8, 9.
[99] Samuel Moyn, "Hannah Arendt on the Secular," *New German Critique* 35 (2008), 71-96, 71.
[100] Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism of Arendt*, 50.

that her philosophical project was already detectable before she became politically engaged. Indeed, in the work that is usually cited as the prime example of just how "unworldly" she was—her 1928 dissertation on Augustine's concept of love—she actually criticized Augustine for being unworldly, and for providing no basis for human community, dignity, and reciprocity. This, I contend, is all the more remarkable, considering that her intellectual environment was certainly characterized by widespread political discontent.

But why have Arendt's political commentators failed, as Benhabib observes, to acknowledge the philosophical significance of her project? In other words, why have the philosophical aspects of it tended to be left out of consideration, on the assumption that they are separate from her political project, rather than interrelated with it?[101] One likely reason is to be found in Arendt's heavily cited claim that she was not a philosopher, but rather a political theorist.[102] However, if her use of the term *tradition* is idiosyncratic, so is her use of the term *philosophy*; as Anya Topolski observes, "[w]ith this term she categorizes all thinkers—rarely citing exceptions—from Parmenides to Heidegger as seeking singularity"—that is, the "substratum" of the human being in the singular—and "as being averse to plurality."[103] This accusation against philosophy *per se* is her reason for dissociating herself from philosophy. This, however, amounts to a philosophical reason for not being a philosopher, as Loidolt observes (and one may add that Arendt was not exactly the first philosopher to deny being a philosopher).[104] Further, as Loidolt also notes, Arendt's distinction "forces artificial limits onto philosophy": it would be "equally possible to imbue philosophical discourse with concern for plurality and elaborate this as a genuinely new and transformative approach."[105] Indeed, the *Denktagebuch* reveals, I would like to add, that this was in fact how Arendt herself initially characterized her project: in an entry of 1953, she proposed a reevaluation of "all philosophical statements on Man under the assumption that men, and not Man, inhabit the earth," a task that demands "a *philosophy* for which men exist only in the plural.

[101] Recall that ever since the "Arendt renaissance," the vast majority of the literature has been focused on the actuality and potential political applications of Arendt's thought (as opposed to the previous caricature-like portrayal of Arendt as a polis-nostalgic philosopher).
[102] Arendt, "What Remains," 1.
[103] Anya Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), 20.
[104] To mention a famous example, Nietzsche denied being a philosopher, presenting himself instead as a psychologist; and while Arendt claims that philosophers have not been political theorists, Nietzsche maintains that no philosopher has ever been a psychologist. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How To Become What You Are* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 92–93.
[105] Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 2.

Its field is human plurality."[106] Besides, while Arendt claims to have "said goodbye to philosophy once and for all," she also says that "[I]f I can be said to 'have come from anywhere,' it is from the tradition of German philosophy."[107] Also, while Arendt rarely commented on her method, her biographer and student, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, mentions that to her students, Arendt had described herself as "a sort of phenomenologist."[108] In any event, this all depends on Arendt's work, not on her claims about it.

While this dissertation thus takes seriously the philosophical—and theological—aspects of Arendt's work, it does not attempt to depoliticize Arendt, or to claim that exclusively political interpretations of her work are of no consequence. Rather, it is a matter of supplementing and complementing these interpretations; for, as the section above made clear, the philosophical and political aspects of her work are coexistent and interrelated. More specifically, this dissertation is situated within a tradition of phenomenological interpretation. This, of course, is not to say that I take this to be the only valid perspective on Arendt's thinking, or that I regard all parts of Arendt's thinking to be nothing but phenomenological. However, the sources on which this dissertation is based—not least *The Human Condition* and *Vita Activa*—are among the most Heideggerian and phenomenological of Arendt's oeuvre. Indeed, the account of political action that Arendt presents in *The Human Condition* is the focal point of previous phenomenological interpretations. Attending to the dispute about the moral status of Arendtian action, such phenomenological approaches have proliferated during the last two decades.[109]

Despite the growing number of phenomenological studies of this aspect of Arendt's thinking, such approaches are still peripheral in Arendt studies; indeed, the only comprehensive and

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[106] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 295 (January, 1953); italic mine, underlinings in original. Arendt incorporated the first quotation into *Human Condition,* 7.
[107] Arendt, "What Remains," 2; Hannah Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt," *Encounter* 22, no. 1 (1964): 53–54.
[108] Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 405. Cf. Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 1, 4.
[109] See James G Hart, "Hannah Arendt: The Care of the World and of the Self," in *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy*, ed. John J. Drummond and Embree Lester (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 87–106; Marieke Borren, "'A Sense of the World': Hannah Arendt's Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Common Sense," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 21, no. 2 (2013): 225–55; Sophie Loidolt, "Hannah Arendts Phänomenologie Der Pluralität: Sozialontologische, Politische Und Ethische Aspekte," *HannahArendt. Net* 9, no. 1 (2018); Peter Trawny, *Denkbarer Holocaust: Die Politische Ethik Hannah Arendts* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005); Bethania. Assy, *Hannah Arendt : An Ethics of Personal Responsibility* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2008); Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality*; Annabel Herzog, "Responsibility," in *Hannah Arendt: Key Concepts*, ed. Patrick Hayden (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 185–95; Steve Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and Political Theory: Challenging the Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Alice MacLachlan, "An Ethic of Plurality: Reconciling Politics and Morality in Hannah Arendt," in *History and Judgement*, ed. A. MacLachlan and I. Torsen, vol. 21 (Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, 2006), 1–15.

thorough exploration of Arendt's phenomenological background was published only last year.[110] The tardiness of such inquiries is probably due to the highly politicized debate about Arendt's relation to Heidegger, in which, as we saw, existential-phenomenological motifs in Arendt's thought were considered suspicious, being associated with a dubious political form of Existenz philosophy. By the same token, insofar as Arendt's phenomenological background has been considered at all, it has been reduced almost exclusively to Heidegger's phenomenology.[111] Indeed, one of Loidolt's main contributions is to have widened the scope of inquiry by taking into account the founder of modern phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (with whom Arendt also studied), and by considering Arendt in the context of the phenomenologists of her own generation, such as Sartre, Fink, Merleau-Ponty, Patočka, and Lévinas. Usually referred to as "third generation phenomenologists," these figures, in their different ways, transformed phenomenology.[112] As Loidolt spells out in detail, the same is true of Arendt: "with her concept of plurality," Arendt "rethought the philosophical tradition she came from. […] [P]lurality is a paradigm that introduces the political into philosophical and phenomenological thought—just as the paradigm of alterity [as epitomized by Lévinas] has provoked an ethical turn in phenomenology."[113] In other words, Arendt politicizes the key concepts of phenomenology, such as subjectivity, intersubjectivity, world, appearance, and experience. In exploring all this, Loidolt scrutinizes the meaning of Arendt's terminology (even if her interpretation of Arendt and phenomenology is apologetic), thus avoiding what Maria Robaszkiewicz identifies as a pitfall in Arendt studies: the fact that many scholars "simply adopt Arendt's language […] without supplying a deeper analysis of its content and context."[114]

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[110] Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*.

[111] In fact, even in the studies of Arendt's intellectual relation to Heidegger, phenomenology is treated with reluctance. This is evident in the works of the two most prominent scholars, Benhabib and Villa. As Loidolt notes, "[w]hile Villa pursues a postmodern interpretation […] that tends to avoid phenomenological links, Benhabib openly rejects what she calls Arendt's 'phenomenological essentialism' as methodologically pernicious for her whole project." Loidolt, 6. Taminiaux is an exception, though: while influenced by post-structuralism, he is considerably more attentive to the existential-phenomenological aspects of Arendt's debt to Heidegger. Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker*.

[112] Loidolt describes both Husserl and Heidegger as first-generation phenomenologists, and Arendt's generation as the second generation. Loidolt's taxonomy may be due to her eager to counter the view "that Husserl's and Heidegger's approaches have basically nothing to do with each other." Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 8. Yet whatever the reason, it is not very logical: Heidegger was born 30 years later than Husserl (and 17 years before Arendt). In referring instead to Arendt as belonging to the third generation, I follow the taxonomy of Lester E Embree and Kevin Thompson, eds., *Phenomenology of the Political* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000).

[113] Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 1–2.

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From our perspective, the important point is that Loidolt expounds and phenomenologically substantiates what has only been briefly noted by a few scholars: that plurality is not a mere empirical fact of diversity, "but essentially something we have to take up and *do*. Therefore, it manifests itself only as an *actualization of plurality in a space of appearances*," that is, a shared world, or what Arendt refers to as "the web of relationships," constituted by a "plurality of agents."[115] This means that plurality is contingent on interhuman activity, and thus may or may not be actualized. This is what Loidolt calls Arendt's "enactive approach to conditionality," which foregrounds the "subject's relatedness to the world and others through activities."[116]

From our perspective, this is important because it pertains to "the controversy over intersubjectivity" and to the question of Arendt's response to Heidegger's notion of Mitsein. At the center of the controversy over the latter was (and still is) the fact that Heidegger, as Wolfe concisely summarizes it, made an "ontologically significant distinction between the capability for relationships and its achievement. Real others are bracketed from the analysis; the ontological concept of *being-with* is called upon to explicate, univocally, both the attainment and the failure of actual community."[117] To put it another way, the question of the actual presence of others is "ontologically irrelevant." Now, it is exactly this "ontological significant distinction" that Arendt contests. As I will show, this appears most prominently in Arendt's reflections on forgiveness in *Vita Activa*: redefining the Heideggerian term *Mitwelt,* Arendt employs the latter to signify a political space of appearance, contingent on the actual "presence and acting of others." Furthermore, speaking of "the call [*Ruf*] of the Mitwelt" (as opposed to Heidegger's famous and disputed "call [Ruf] of conscience"), Arendt "replaces" Mit*sein*: using active verbs in the plural, she advances instead the corrective terms "mit-*sind*" and "mit-handeln" ["are-with" and "act-with"], which again serves to emphasize the actual presence and inter-action of plural others.[118]

But if a main contribution of Loidolt's study has been to widen the focus from Heidegger to the development of phenomenology in general, why do I choose to "re-restrict" it? As already noted, I believe that there are surprisingly large lacunas in the literature on Arendt's intellectual relation to Heidegger, and that these are particularly relevant to the theme of this

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Maria Robaszkiewicz, "Review of Sophie Loidolt, Phenomenology of Plurality: Hannah Arendt on Political Intersubjectivity," *Phenomenological Reviews*, accessed May 9, 2019, https://reviews.ophen.org/2018/06/21/sophie-loidolt-phenomenology-of-plurality-hannah-arendt-on-political-intersubjectivity/.

[115] Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 2.

[116] Loidolt, 109.

[117] Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, 183. As we will see, this has to do with Heidegger's distinction between the ontological and ontic level, and between an existen*tial* and *existentiell* analysis.

[118] Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa Oder Vom Tätigen Leben* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960), 236.

dissertation. Besides, in taking into account the fact that Bultmann also concerned himself with Mitsein and developed a "double identity" as a Lutheran theologian and an existential phenomenologist, this dissertation in a sense contributes to widening the perspective of Arendt studies.

Finally, it should be noted that virtually all the phenomenological interpretations of Arendt have been conducted by proponents of phenomenology, that is, by authors who are not only interested in understanding Arendt, but also in using her writings to develop and defend phenomenological theories. Even if this may sometimes result in apologetic readings of the phenomenological motifs in Arendt, it is, of course, a perfectly legitimate philosophical undertaking. However, as an intellectual historian, I am more interested in understanding than in evaluating and judging.

1: Arendt's Early Writings and Her Intellectual Formation in Weimar Germany

This opening chapter sets out to do what has hitherto been the exception rather than the rule: to read Arendt from the beginning. This means considering not only Arendt's writings from the interwar period, but also her university studies in the intellectual climate of Weimar Germany. Guided by the overall questions and themes of this dissertation, the following exploration is necessarily limited and selective. Since Arendt did not begin to write on forgiveness until 1950, the objective of this chapter is to trace the development of the thought trains that led up to her later reflections on forgiveness and guilt—be it in her initial rejection of forgiveness, or in her intersubjective reinterpretation and consequent approval of forgiveness.

Arendt's doctoral dissertation and first book, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin: Versuch einer Philosophischen Interpretation* (submitted in 1928 and published in 1929) features prominently. It does so not only because it was her first book, but more importantly because it marked the beginning of her critical engagement with Heidegger and his account of intersubjectivity.[119] What is more, her dissertation can also be read as her first critical reply to Heidegger's account of guilt. This provides the background to Arendt's later criticism and "transformative use" of Heidegger's theory of guilt and her related polemical redefinition of *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt*, as well as to her famous postwar criticism of collective guilt; for, as I will demonstrate in chapter two, Arendt's criticism of Augustine's doctrine of original sin bears a striking resemblance to her criticism of collective guilt. Moreover, Arendt's work on Augustine's concept of love merits special attention due to its key theme: neighborly love. In addition to the fact that forgiveness is traditionally bound up with neighborly love, this is significant because Arendt, in her reinterpretation of forgiveness, changes her mind on neighborly love, and also because the question of whether forgiveness is related to neighborly love is at the center of her exchange with W. H. Auden.

In inquiring into Arendt's studies and the surrounding intellectual environment, I focus on the so-called "theology of crisis" (also referred to as "dialectical theology," "neo-orthodoxy," and "theology of the word of God") and, to a lesser extent, on existential phenomenology. For if these two intellectual currents, associated above all with Martin Heidegger and Karl Barth, were the most transformative and influential currents in Weimar philosophy and

[119] As outlined in the introduction, this implies that Arendt did so earlier than usually assumed, and before she became politically engaged. As already mentioned, I follow Samuel Moyn's suggestion that Arendt's dissertation can be read as a response to Heidegger and "the controversy over intersubjectivity," while at the same time arguing that Arendt did not respond to Heidegger in the way that Moyn suggests.

theology in general, they were particularly so where Arendt studied. As outlined in the introduction, while large parts of Arendt's indebtedness to Heidegger and phenomenology are by now well-covered, there are still some significant gaps in the literature, not least in terms of the theological aspects of Heidegger's work and his collaboration with Bultmann; and altogether, the theological context of Arendt's studies is an area of neglect. Therefore, special attention will be given to theology.

1.1: Arendt and Theology, and Reading Arendt from the Start: Some Remarks on Previous Research

If Arendt is generally subject to highly diverse interpretations, this is certainly also the case when it comes to the question of her stance on Christianity. At the one end of the interpretative spectrum, we find scholars who focus attention only on Arendt's criticism of Christianity, the most outspoken proponent being Samuel Moyn who presents Arendt as "a thinker who is uninterested in or opposed to religion in general and Christianity in particular."[120] At the other end of the spectrum, echoing Wolin's portrayal of Arendt as a "child" of Heidegger, Jean Elshtain presents Arendt as "Augustine's faithful daughter."[121] Similarly, the contributors to an anthology edited by the Jesuit philosopher James Bernauer depict Arendt as being very sympathetic to Christianity, without going quite so far, though, as Schanz, who bluntly appoints Arendt to be one of "the most significant Christian thinkers" of the twentieth century.[122]

Both these lines of interpretation are, I believe, one-sided. While judiciously accounting for Arendt's criticism of the Western theological tradition, the former (and more dominant) leaves out of concern that Arendt employs religious and theological sources, and subjects theological terms to a political-intersubjective reinterpretation—one example being her attempt to develop a political concept of forgiveness with reference to Jesus and New Testament sources.[123]

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[120] Moyn, "Hannah Arendt on the Secular," 75.
[121] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (University of Notre Dame Pess, 1997), 76.
[122] James William Bernauer, ed., *Amor Mundi Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Boston; Dordrecht; Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987); Schanz, *Handling og ondskab*. See also J. Bernauer, "A Catholic Conversation with Hannah Arendt," in *Friends on the Way: Jesuits Encounter Contemporary Judaism*, ed. Thomas Michel (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 142–65; Hans-Jørgen Schanz, "En Kristen Tænker? – Om Hannah Arendt," in *Modernitet Og Kapitalisme* (Aarhus: Forlaget Modtryk, 2004), 119–35.
[123] This example also illustrates that Arendt's Heidegger-inspired strategy of reading traditional texts against the tradition was not confined to philosophical texts: she also applied it to theological texts. As I will have more to say about below, this forms a part of Arendt's criticism of the political tradition for being "highly selective and to exclude from articulate conceptualization a great variety of authentic political experiences." Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239–39.

As to the latter readings, I agree with Eric Gregory that the "temptation [for theologians] to 'theologize' Arendt is both difficult to resist and prone to distortion given her complicated (and often implicit) engagement with theology and its traditional concerns."[124] A main contribution of John Kiess' aforementioned monograph, *Arendt and Theology*, is therefore to draw a more nuanced and broader picture. However, it is a purely systematic and non-historical study, leaving unexplored Arendt's theological studies and the contemporary theological context. Besides, in the few lines Kiess devotes to Bultmann, he states that Arendt's studies with Bultmann and his "inward" Christianity were a "disappointment" to her. In support of this claim, Kiess cites a letter Arendt sent to Jaspers in 1953. The passage Kiess quotes, however, is a criticism of a certain feature in modern (Protestant) theology, rather than one directed specifically at Bultmann. More importantly, this letter does in fact testify to quite the opposite of what Kiess claims, that is, to Arendt's high regard of Bultmann: "Bultmann is a truly great scholar," she wrote in the letter, and "I learned a lot from Bultmann and owe him a lot. I don't want to forget that debt."[125] Furthermore, Kiess does not mention that Hans Jonas (who also studied with Bultmann and Heidegger) recalls that Arendt "became a terrific student of Bultmann […]. [S]he had such an intense interest in the New Testament that she spent several semesters studying with him" and "visited him again after the war, and always showed him respect."[126]

The research on Arendt's dissertation can be divided into two groups: Augustine scholars who discuss the validity of Arendt's interpretation (or more to the point: defend Augustine against Arendt's criticism)[127], and Arendt scholars who discuss to what extent, if any, Arendt in her later work drew on her Augustine investigation.[128] Hardly any research has dealt with the question

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[124] Quoted in Kiess, *Hannah Arendt and Theology*, 250.
[125] Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence 1926-1969*, eds. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, trans. Robert & Rita Kimber (New York, 1992), 222 & 221, letter from Arendt to Jaspers, July 13, 1953.
[126] Hans Jonas, *Memoirs*, trans. Krishna Winston (Waltham, Mass.; Hanover; London: Brandeis University Press : University Press of New England, 2008), 61.
[127] See, for example, Thomas Breidenthal, "Jesus Is My Neighbor: Arendt, Augustine, and the Politics of Incarnation," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 4 (1998): 489–503; Charles T Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 149–200; Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 197–240.
[128] The scholarship is divided over whether Arendt's dissertation conforms to her later account of *amor mundi*: on the one hand, some scholars read this later account as being in line with Augustine, while others on the contrary argue that it is a criticism of, and a corrective to, Augustine. For an overview of the reception of Arendt's dissertation, see Frauke Annegret Kurbacher, "Frühe Schriften. Der Liebesbegriff Bei Augustin," in *Arendt-Handbuch. Leben, Werk, Wirkung*, ed. Wolfgang Heuer, Bernd Heiter, and Stefanie Rosenmüller (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011), 20–22. The question of the relation between Arendt's dissertation and her mature work is further complicated by the fact that the English version is not simply a translation, but also a reworking of the dissertation that Arendt worked on in the mid-1960s; see below.

of how Arendt's dissertation related to her contemporary intellectual environment. From our perspective, it is this latter point that is of the greatest relevance. In this regard, it is important to note that the English version of the dissertation, which was not published until 1996, is not simply a translation of the original. Instead, it is based on the corrections and additions that Arendt made for a projected publication during the 1960s (a project that she did not complete).[129] In the Anglophone literature, this has led to a widespread occurrence of circular arguments, in which passages only appearing in the English version are used to support an influence of her dissertation on her later work. From our perspective, two examples of this fallacy are especially important to point out.

The first is Moyn's reading. As it happens, one of the most conspicuous differences between Arendt's dissertation and the revisions she made during the 1960s is that the latter contains more explicit references to, and criticism of, Heidegger, one example being her oft-cited statement that "[s]ince it is our expextations and desires are promted by what we remember and guided by a previous knowledge, it is memory and not expectation (for instance, the expectation of death as in Heidegger's approach) that gives unity and wholeness to human existence."[130] Although Moyn notes the importance of consulting the German original, and for the most part steers clear of the aforementioned fallacy, he nonetheless cites passages only appearing in the English version (including the one just cited), using these to support his argument that Arendt "deployed Augustine against Heidegger."[131]

The second example is an essay by Ronald Beiner. The reason why it is especially important to mention Beiner's essay is that his argument bears resemblance to the suggestion I wish to make here: contesting the standard reading, Beiner contends that Arendt's dissertation indicates that "Arendt was a political philosopher before she knew that she was one." Accordingly, Beiner traces "the fundamental [worldly and political] structure of her philosophical concerns back to an earlier phase of her thought, prior to the politicizing trauma of Hitler and the Holocaust."[132] "The entirety of Arendt's philosophical work," Beiner concludes, "merely elaborates on the question she had posed directly to Augustine: 'Why should we make a desert out of this world?'"[133] However,

[129] To appropriately map Arendt's intellectual development, it is therefore important to consult the original German version. E.B. Ashton drafted a translation of most of Arendt's original dissertation. When quoting her dissertation, I lean on this translation, which is available at the Library of Congress, referred to as "Copy A."
[130] Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joana Vechiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 56.
[131] Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 82.
[132] Ronald Beiner, "Love and Worldliness: Hannah Arendt's Reading of Saint Augustine," in *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later*, ed. Larry May and Jerome Kohn (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1996), 270.
[133] Beiner, 281.

there is one basic problem with Beiner's argument, namely that of circularity: the majority of his references (including this citation) are only to be found in the English version.

Beyond this, Beiner's main line of argument concerns Arendt's criticism of the Christian tendency to desert the world and, conversely, her concern for worldliness and human community. While Arendt certainly did display such a concern in her dissertation, this should be seen in connection to what she stated as her research question: her inquiry into Augustine's reflections on love, she explained, was "guided by the question of neighborly love" and "by the question of the other human being's relevance [*der Relevanz des Anderen*]."[134] (Throughout her dissertation, Arendt uses the words *the other* and *the neighbor* interchangeably.) By the same token, since the commandment states that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself," the question of the relevance of the other is, Arendt claims, to be seen in connection with the question of what it means to love oneself. This is key to my contention that a phenomenological notion of intersubjectivity is traceable in Arendt's dissertation, and that the latter can be read as a contribution to the "controversy over intersubjectivity." For, as outlined in the introduction, a distinctive feature of phenomenological accounts of intersubjectivity is that "the three dimensions self, other, and world belong together."[135]

In terms of contextual studies considering theological aspects of Arendt's "Weimar inheritance," two essays (by Peter Gordon and Rodrigo Chacón, respectively) should be mentioned, both of which focus on the relation between theology, on the one hand, and philosophy and politics, on the other.[136] Noting that political theology loomed large in Weimar thought (not least in the version advocated by Carl Schmitt under the "slogan" that "[a]ll consequential political concepts are secularized theological concepts"), Gordon poses a "negative question": "Why does Arendt's conception of political life *not* conform to the terms of Weimar political theological debate?"[137]

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[134] Hannah Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff Bei Augustin: Versuch Einer Philosophischen Interpretation* (Berlin: Philo, 2005), 23–24. Copy A, 241-42.
[135] Zahavi, *Phenomenology*, 88.
[136] Peter Eli Gordon, "The Concept of the Apolitical: German Jewish Thought and Weimar Political Theology," *Social Research*, The Concept of the Apolitical, 74, no. 3 (2007): 855–78; Rodrigo Chacón, "Hannah Arendt in Weimar: Beyond the Theological-Political Predicament?," in *The Weimar Moment: Liberalism, Political Theology, and Law*, ed. Leonard V. Kaplan and Rudy Koshar (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 73–107. For a contextual exploration of anti-historicism in Arendt that also deals with Weimar theology, see Liisi Keedus, *The Crisis of German Historicism: The Early Political Thought of Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[137] Gordon, "The Concept of the Apolitical," 856; Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 36.

Surveying some of the "political-theological alternatives" that appeared in Arendt's formative years, Gordon highlights Leo Strauss and what he termed "the theologico-political predicament," a notion profoundly different from that of Carl Schmitt: "The term itself suggests not continuity but a rupture […] between two radically distinct mods of experience;" that is, in brief, between revelation and reason.[138] Indeed, Strauss' assumption was, Gordon expounds, that "politics and philosophy stand incorrigibly opposed and that the political is a realm of danger." Strauss developed his notion with reference to the philosopher and Jewish theologian, Franz Rosenzweig, and his notion of the *a*political: maintaining that that there was a contrast between revelation and reason, as a result of which religious and political values were opposed, Rosenzweig "drafted an apolitical theology that sees in politics only ruin and seeks redemption wholly otherwise than politics." In other words, he envisioned "not a utopia *of* politics, but a utopia *without* politics."[139] This happened, Gordon notes, in "that moment of theological and political crisis […] when so many philosophers and social theorists across Central Europe were seized by the new mood of political disenchantment;" and "many of these thinkers came to believe that because all prior metaphysical foundations for the political realm were destroyed, the only proper response was a wholesale withdrawal from the political as such."[140] Now, Gordon's claim is that not only with respect to political theology, but also compared to "the theologico-political predicament," Arendt's "conception of non-theological politics" offers "a dramatic alternative." Along the lines of Villa's interpretation, Gordon stresses Arendt's Heidegger-inspired destruction of "onto-theology," that is, "the metaphysical doctrine that ascribed both the highest reality and the highest good to a supersensible entity" (such as God or Platonic Forms). In other words, Gordon focuses exclusively on Arendt's criticism of religion, arguing that "Arendt welcomed the collapse of religion and its entire metaphysical structure as an absolute prerequisite for authentic political action."[141]

Before proceeding, a few comments on Gordon's stimulating essay: first, we should note that rather than comparing the Weimar debate with Arendt's studies and work from that period, Gordon compares it with her political theory, that is, with her mature work. Moreover, while I agree that Arendt's devotion to the political "offers a dramatic alternative" to her Weimar inheritance,

[138] Gordon, "The Concept of the Apolitical," 857–58. The basic thought is, as Gordon summarizes it, "that while theology is open to revelation and therefore grants the human being's dependency upon a nonhuman source of moral-political instruction, modem philosophy […] dispenses with any external supports and declares reason's independent capacity for building a just human order."
[139] Gordon, 867, 870. Rosenzweig did so in his major work of 1921, *The Star of Redemption* [*Der Stern der Erlösung*].
[140] Gordon, 868.
[141] Gordon, 859, 871–72.

Gordon's claim that it "left virtually no imprint upon Arendt's thinking" is, I believe, in need of modification and specification. For one thing, what Gordon identified as a widespread view in Weimar thought—that "politics and philosophy stand incorrigibly opposed and that the political is a realm of danger"—does in fact apply to Arendt, too. For not only did she, as already mentioned, insist that politics and philosophy were at odds (albeit that she "sided with" politics); she did actually also depict the political as "a realm danger." Indeed, as I will spell out in chapter four, she payed much attention to "the enormous risks of action"—and strikingly, she also spoke of "action's predicaments."[142] What is more, she also employed the term *redemption*, proposing a "possible redemption" from the predicaments of action—a redemption she identified in the faculties of promising and forgiving.[143] Yet, while Arendt claimed the political to be ridden with predicaments and so to be in need of redemption, the decisive difference is that she "located" the redemption within the political: forgiving and promising are, as we will see in chapter four, "potentialities of action itself." [144] Thus, this exemplifies her politicizing and "intersubjectifizing" of terms traditionally interpreted theologically. For these reasons, I suggest that rather than saying that the part of Arendt's Weimar inheritance explored by Gordon left "no imprint on Arendt's thought," it would be more accurate to say that it forms a polemic backdrop.

A final comment on Gordon's essay: it is important to add that revelation and divine transcendence were a theme in both Jewish and Protestant Weimar theology, and that this theme was introduced by Karl Barth.[145] Indeed, in positing a "theological-political predicament," Strauss drew particular attention to Barth: "Most characteristic of the post-World War I world was the resurgence of theology: Karl Barth. (The preface to the first edition of […] *Romans* is of great importance also to non-theologians […].)"[146] More generally, the trajectories of German Jewish and Protestant theology to a large extent ran parallel—in fact, much more so than Protestant and

[142] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 236.
[143] Arendt, 237.
[144] Arendt, 237.
[145] For an exploration of revelation and transcendence in interwar Jewish and Protestant theology, see chapter four, "Totaliter Aliter," in Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 113–63.
[146] Leo Strauss, "A Giving of Accounts," in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), 460. Also, in explaining what, in 1925-28, had led him to study Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Strauss states: "The reawakening of theology [Weimar Germany], which for me is marked by the names of Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig, appeared to make it necessary to investigate how far the critique of orthodox theology—Jewish and Christian—deserved to be victorious. Since then the theological-political problem has remained the theme of my investigations." Leo Strauss, "Preface to Hobbes Politische Wissenschaft," [1964]; quoted in David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 121.

Catholic theology—both turning away from the liberal forms of theology that had been predominant in "the long nineteenth century."[147] The same applies to German philosophy: like Jewish and Protestant theology, it had until recently been dominated by neo-Kantianism.

Also focusing on the disputed relationship between theology, on the one hand, and philosophy and politics, on the other, Chacón's essay is a criticism of Gordon's claim that the "theologico-political predicament" left "no imprint on Arendt's thinking." The young Arendt was, according to Chacón, "a thinker trying to hold philosophy and theology together in a context dominated by the Protestant collaboration of Heidegger and Bultmann."[148] Chacón's argument is rather convoluted, and he himself notes that this "may seem like a long detour."[149] What is important from our perspective is the fact that Chacón is virtually the only Arendt scholar to have dealt with Bultmann and his collaboration with Heidegger. I will therefore briefly state the ways in which I intend to supplement and expand on the theological contextualization of Arendt that Chacón has initiated.

As stated in the introduction, I will consider Bultmann's response to Heidegger's account of Mitsein, investigate Bultmann's chapter on forgiveness in his book of 1926, *Jesus*, and inquire into Heidegger's engagement with sin and ontological *Schuld*. Beyond this, I will draw attention to the fact that recently published source material has resulted in a shift in Heidegger scholarship, particularly with regard to the question of how he envisioned the relation between philosophy and theology: far from seeing philosophy and theology as belonging together, Heidegger, at the time of *Being and Time*, in fact viewed the relationship between them as one of

[147] Particularly influential was a Kantian variety of liberal theology that maintained the primacy of ethics and moral reason, two of the most prominent proponents being Hermann Cohen (1842 – 1918) and Adolf Harnack (1851 – 1930). The official Catholic theology was "neo-Thomism," and Catholic theology was thus much less in dialogue with other academic disciplines and much more anti-modernist and anti-liberal than Protestant and Jewish theology; see Linda Woodhead, Christopher Partridge, and Hiroko Kawanami, eds., *Religions in the modern world: Traditions and transformations* (Routledge, 2016), 218–25.

[148] Chacón, "Hannah Arendt in Weimar: Beyond the Theological-Political Predicament?," 91.

[149] Positing a contrast between German-Christian and Jewish sources, Chacón contends that Arendt was faced not only with the predicament of holding theology and philosophy together, but also with the additional difficulty that "in her context the only language available to hold philosophy and theology together was the philosophical 'sublation' of Christianity attempted by Heidegger." In other words, on Chacón's reading, the latter difficulty was one "that arises from the dependence of one's spiritual existence on two antagonistic […] sources:" German-Christian and Jewish. In her mature thought, however, Arendt "ceased to regard theology and philosophy as belonging together." After what is indeed a long detour, Chacón then arrives at the conclusion that Arendt is to be read against the same "experiential background" as Strauss and Rosenzweig, which is to say that the neo-Kantian philosopher and Jewish theologian Hermann Cohen (1842 – 1918) "largely determined the context in which, that is also to say *against* which" Arendt's thinking arose. Since Marburg, as Chacón concedes, had "long ceased to be the Mecca of Neo-Kantianism" when Arendt studied there, and since she virtually never referred to Cohen, this is, I think, a rather speculative suggestion. Chacón bases his suggestion on "Arendt's affinity to" dialectical theology which "did respond […] to the way of thinking he [Cohen] represented." Chacón, 93–95.

dissonance.[150] As Wolfe has pointed out, Heidegger developed this view via "an intensive engagement with the question of sin, which ends in rejecting revelation and grace as the appropriate horizon within which to interpret sin." Finally, with respect to Arendt's studies with Bultmann, I will briefly consider some archival material, namely the records [*Protokolle*] of Bultmann's 1925-26 seminar "The anthropology of Paul."[151]

1.2: Existential Phenomenology and the Theology of Crisis: Arendt as a University Student in Weimar Germany

Born in 1906, Hannah Arendt grow up in a middle-class family, in what was then the north-eastern, Protestant fringe of the German Empire [*Kaiserreich*]; more precisely, in Königsberg, the capital of East Prussia (today the Russian city Kaliningrad).[152] Like many other Jews fleeing from persecution in Russia, Arendt's great grandfather had arrived in Königsberg in the mid-nineteenth century. In turn, her grandfather became the president of the city's large liberal Jewish community. However, among Arendt's immediate family and friends, there was, as Arendt recalled in a 1964 interview, relatively little discussion of religious or ethnic issues; instead, there were lively conversations about social democracy and German politics. In the same interview, Arendt described her mother—who became her sole parent due to the early death of her father—as "completely a-religious."[153] From an early age, Arendt showed intellectual curiosity, learning ancient Greek and reading philosophy, as well as her famous "fellow Königsberger" Immanuel Kant, with whom Arendt would remain in critical dialogue throughout her career.

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[150] Wolfe summarizes the new interpretation of Heidegger's position: "During the 1920s, Heidegger turned from the development of a phenomenology of religion to that of a principled 'a-theistic' method—a philosophical methodology, that is, which brackets God from its analyses, without necessarily implying an atheistic worldview. Until the mid-1920s, Heidegger regarded this a-theistic philosophy as a *preparatio evangeliae*, a phenomenological groundwork for understanding the existential situation of man into which God irrupts. However, already by 1927, this view gives way to a prioritization of philosophy as a competitor or successor to the role of mediatrix of an authentic life." Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, 61 cf. ; Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology*, 66–115.

[151] There is a protocol containing 76 handwritten pages, with minutes of all the single lectures in this set of lectures. This document is accessible at Archiv der Philipps-Universität Marburg. A two-and-a-half page extract has been published in Bernd Jaspert, ed., *Sachgemäße Exegese: die Protokolle aus Rudolf Bultmanns Neutestamentlichen Seminaren 1921-1951* (Marburg: Elwert, 1996), 39–42.

[152] This biographical sketch relies on Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: for Love of the World* 2nd. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Antonia Grunenberg, *Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger: History of a Love*, trans. Elizabeth von Witzke Birmingham and Kristina Lebedeva (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

[153] Hannah Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains': A Conversation with Gauss."," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 6.

In 1922, Arendt moved to Berlin, the capital of the newly founded and short-lived Weimar Republic (1918-33), which offered greater opportunity to pursue her intellectual interests. Between 1922 and 1924, while preparing for her high-school leaving certificate [*Abitur*], Arendt's mother arranged for her to attend seminars and lectures at the University of Berlin, particularly in classics, philosophy, and Christian theology. Most notably, she attended lectures on Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) given by the young philosopher of religion and Catholic theologian Romano Guardini (1885-1968), who championed an existentialist interpretation of Christianity (this being rather unusual for a Catholic theologian at that time).[154] As Arendt's biographer Elisabeth Young-Bruehl reports, Kierkegaard became an intellectual idol for Arendt: "she was so taken with his work that she decided to make theology her major field of study when she went on to the university as an officially enrolled student. She was, even then, critical of any form of dogmatic religion—not because she was non-Christian, but because dogmatism was non-Kierkegaardian."[155]

Arendt chose to study Protestant theology at Marburg University, which was at the forefront of theological innovation.[156] When Arendt studied with Bultmann in 1924-26, his career was in a period of reorientation. Having begun his career as a historical-theological scholar, Bultmann in the early 1920s approached the new, anti-historicist dialectical theology / theology of crisis.[157] This highly transformative movement was initiated after World War One by the Reformed (neo-Calvinist) theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968). Illustrative of Bultmann's development, the reading list from his aforementioned 1925-26 course of lectures on "The Anthropology of Paul" shows that an essential part of the reading consisted of Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans* (hereafter *Romans*).

[154] The official Catholic theology was that of "neo-Thomism,", and Catholic theology was generally more closed, anti-modernist and anti-liberal than Protestant or Jewish theology; see Linda Woodhead, Christopher Partridge, and Hiroko Kawanami, eds., *Religions in the modern world: Traditions and transformations* (Routledge, 2016), 218–25. Guardini is thus regarded as a precursor of the Catholic liberalization of the 1960s; see Robert Anthony Krieg, *Romano Guardini: A Precursor of Vatican II* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).
[155] Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: for Love of the World*, 36.
[156] Illustratively, Karl Barth explains that the reason why he began his theology studies in Berlin was that it was a compromise between the wish of his conservative father that his son should study in Tübingen—the stronghold of tradition and conservatism—and the (at that time) liberally inclined son's desire to study in Marburg. See Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 51.
[157] The question as to how close Bultmann in this period got to Barth and the dialectical theology is a disputed one; see Konrad Hammann, *Rudolf Bultmann: Eine Biographie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 134–48.

Widely regarded as the most path-breaking work in twentieth century Protestant thought, this work, whose first edition came out in 1919, stands out as the key text of the dialectical movement.[158]

As to theology of crisis, it is of importance not only because Bultmann was influenced by this current, but also because it was among the most influential currents in theology as well as in Weimar thought at large. Theologians at that time, we should bear in mind, held a more prominent position in academia than today.[159] Additionally, as Peter Gordon and John McCormick point out, a characteristic feature of Weimar thought was that "[i]ntellectual labors of the era […] exemplified a boldness of inquiry that would, in current jargon, be characterized as 'interdisciplinary.' Scholars, critics, and artists frequently cut across the customary boundaries separating philosophy, history, and artistic criticism, political theory and theology, not to mention science and metaphysics." By the same token, leading intellectuals, Gordon and McCormick proceed, "worked within a shared intellectual horizon." Above all, it is striking "how various thinkers in different domains identified their age as one of dissension and disorientation. Indeed, if there is one theme that seems to appear across the entire range of Weimar intellectual history it is the very awareness of anxiety signified by the prevalence of the term crisis."[160] As we shall now see, the crisis theologians passionately disassociated theology from culture and from historical and social reasoning—and ironically it was not least in so doing that they reflected their historical and cultural situation.

1.2.1: God's No to All That Is Human: Barth and the Theology of Crisis

In 1914, the young and as yet little-known Karl Barth interpreted the outbreak of the Great War as a sign that God is nothing like man: "We thought we were on the right path, we Europeans […] Now comes God and says […] No! You are not on the right path! […] your ways are not my ways, and your thoughts are not my thoughts." Initially strongly devoted to liberal theology, Barth had posited a connection between the kingdom of God and social democracy; and, despite this profound reorientation, he could still assert in 1915 that socialism signaled that "the kingdom of God does not

[158] In the period from 1919 to 1926, it came out in five revised editions, which were all printed in high numbers. Barth made most revisions in the second edition from 1922, which contained a new and famous preface.
[159] This is true even though theology had become less prominent in academia in the course of the nineteenth century, where historical sciences had gained dominance (and that Barth, accordingly, sought to give theology a "new injection of confidence" (as Woodhead puts it (Woodhead, *Christianity*, 378)). Thus, whereas today probably only a minority of academics outside the theological departments would be familiar with the works of leading Protestant theologians, Barth was a major figure on the Weimar intellectual scene at large.
[160] Peter E Gordon and John P McCormick, ""Introduction: Weimar Thought: Continuity and Crisis," in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon and John P McCormick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 1–2, 5.

stand still, that God is at work."[161] However, the claim that there is no point of contact whatsoever between God and humanity—that God is *der ganz Andere* ("wholly other") and "stands in infinite qualitative distinction from men and everything human"—would come to be what Barth stressed above all else (most powerfully in his aforementioned breakthrough book, *Romans*).[162] Indeed, this claim regarding the unbridgeable distance between humanity and God explains why the theological revolt initiated by Barth has come to be referred to as the "theology of crisis," one of the etymological meanings of the Greek term *krisis* being separation.[163] It also explains the use of the term *dialectical theology*; for Barth, dialectics is not a matter of Hegelian reconciliation, but rather the exact opposite. Setting God against humanity, and eternity against time, Barth insisted that such contradictions cannot be overcome, but must rather be recognized and expressed as contradictions. Since the unbridgeable distance between God and humanity means that God is entirely beyond human comprehension, theology needs to be dialectical: theologians need to "dwell in tension" and speak in terms of irresolvable contradictions if they are to have any hope of being able to speak about God—while remaining aware that "the knowledge of God is never the secure possession of human beings (but must be received anew in each moment)."[164]

One of the first to ally himself with Barth was the Lutheran theologian Friedrich Gogarten (1887-1967). In 1920, Gogarten published an iconoclastic essay entitled "Between the Times," which gave rise to a short-lived (1922-33) but nonetheless immensely influential journal of the same name, this serving as the organ of the crisis theologians. In addition to Barth and

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[161] Quoted in Rodrigo Chacon, "Hannah Arendt in Weimar: beyond the theological-political predicament", *The Weimar moment: liberalism, political theology, and law*, 2012, 82; and Dieter Schellong, "Jenseits von Politischer Theologie Und Unpolitischer Theologie. Zum Ansatz Der, Dialektischen'Theologie," in *Religionstheorie Und Politische Theologie*, ed. Jacob Taubes, vol. 1: Der Fürst dieser Welt. Carl Schmitt und die Folgen (Munick: Fink Verlag, 1983), 297.

[162] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London; New York: Oxford U.P., 1980), 330–31 (translation modified). Barth adapted the phrase "infinitely qualitatively distinction" from Kierkegaard's description of the relation between time and eternity. On Barth's phrase *der ganz Andere* ("He who is wholly other") as opposed to Rudolf Otto's (1869-1937) *das ganz Andere* ("that which is wholly other"), see Frank Jehle, *Ever Against the Stream: The Politics of Karl Barth, 1906-1968* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 38.

[163] The label "theologians of crisis" was not in fact coined by the theologians associated with this movement, but rather polemically by Paul Tillich (1886-1965). Nonetheless, Barth and his comrades would soon embrace it. On Tillich's designation, see Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century," in *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, ed. Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise (Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2016), 24. On the etymology and conceptual history of *Krisis*, see Reinhart Koselleck, "Krise," in *Historisches Wörterbuch Der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Gründer Karlfried, vol. 4 (Basel: Swarbe & Co, 1976), 1235–40.

[164] Bruce L McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford; Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 2004), 141. The term "dwell in tension" is adopted from Amy Marga, "Dialectical Theology," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, eds. Hans-Josef Klauck et al., vol. 6 (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2012).

Gogarten, the most prominent contributor to this journal was Bultmann.[165] On the whole, the dialectical theologians, who came from both Reformed and Lutheran traditions, were more united in what they criticized than in the alternative theology they proposed. Thus, before long—and well before Gogarten joined the pro-Nazi German Christians in August 1933—disagreements were audible, and eventually deteriorated into factional bitterness. The key divider was the question of there were any "general points of contact" for faith.[166] Whereas several other theologians began to "soften" their position—to allow for some point of contact—Barth stood firm on the absolute transcendence of God: "There is no way from us to God—not even *via negativa* not even a *via dialectica* nor *paradoxa.* The god who stood at the end of some human way—even of this way—would not be God."[167] Hence, when Barth's theological ally Emil Brunner (1889-1966) indicated a point of contact between God and humanity, Barth tellingly replied with a pamphlet entitled *Nein!*[168]

Barth's commentaries on Paul initiated his thoroughgoing, uncompromising, and passionate revolt against his theological mentors and the theological schools they represented. Calling for a "re-Reformation," Barth endeavored to fundamentally reinterpret the history of Protestant theology, and above all the historicist and subjectivist-experiential trends in nineteenth-century theology. Barth summed these up in the single category of *liberal theology*, which he considered to be a by-product of modern culture, a *Kultur-protestantismus*.[169] Dissociating God from everything human and worldly, and rejecting all natural theology and philosophy of religion, Barth argued that the liberals had taken man, not God, as their starting point, and in doing so had domesticated God through a psychologistic anthropomorphism. Preeminently, they had done so, Barth indicted, by basing theology on inner subjective experience [*Erlebnis*, as distinguished from *Erfahrung*], instead of on what he saw as its antipode: revelation as an objective event.[170]

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[165] See below. Other important contributors included Eduard Thurneysen (1988-74) and Emil Brunner (1889-1966).
[166] This formulation is taken from Gregersen, "Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century," 24.
[167] Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (P. Smith, 1978 [1928]), 177. For the same reason, Barth became wary of the label "dialectical theology;" see Karl Barth, "Abschied von 'Zwischen den Zeiten,'" in *Anfänge der Dialektischen Theologie*, Vol. 2, ed. J. Molttmann (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1963 [1933]), 313–321.
[168] Karl Barth, *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner* (Kaiser, 1934).
[169] What matters here is how Barth presents theological history; whether his account of liberal theology is historically illuminating is another question. This bears mentioning because Barth has been—and indeed still is—enormously influential, not only in the normative discipline called systematic theology, but also when it comes to the writing of the history of theology. As Linda Woodhead observes, Barth's "loaded interpretation of modern theological history is now widely accepted." Linda Woodhead, *An Introduction to Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 375.
[170] On *Erlebnis* (which is sometimes translated as "lived experience") versus *Erfahrung*, see Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley, Calif: University of

Barth's theological attack was linked to a personal and moral allegation against his mentors: not only had they failed theologically; their theological betrayal was also linked to moral and political misjudgment and misbehavior. Thus, in his retrospective self-narration, he discredited liberal theology by indicating that it was causally related to the fact that many of his former teachers had signed a manifesto in support of the Kaiser's war policy: "I suddenly realized that I could not any longer follow either their ethics and dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and of history."[171] However, in singling out liberal theology as *Kriegstheologie*, Barth overlooked the fact that nearly all the German churches had supported the declaration of war (not to mention that the outbreak of the war was met with widespread enthusiasm among European intellectuals).[172]

Remarkably, in his subversive, neo-orthodox reinterpretation of Protestant theology and its history, Barth set out to clear away metaphysics. In so doing, he recalled Christian rebels and outsiders, such as Franz Overbeck (1837-1905) and Kierkegaard, as well as nineteenth-century critics of religion such as Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) and Nietzsche, subscribing to the claim that religion and metaphysics are nothing but human projections. Hence, presenting Christianity as an objective theology based exclusively on God's self-revelation in Christ, Barth controversially proposed that Christianity is not a religion. This is related to his claim that the radical separation between God and humanity has been momentarily lifted once—and only once—through a revelation that cut down to humanity "directly from above" [*senkrecht von oben*]. For Barth, this is the Archimedean point of "all or nothing," the sole acceptable foundation of theology; a fact that led Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45) to characterize Barth's position as a "positivism of

California Press, 2006), 11–12. Barth's main target was Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the principal proponent of religious *Erlebnis* and the pioneer of liberal Protestantism in its Romantic variety.

[171] Karl Barth, "Evangelical Theology in the Nineteenth Century," in Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1938), 14.

"Evangelical Theology in the Nineteenth Century" (1956) in *The Humanity of God* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1966, 14. For an English translation of the manifesto "An die Kulturwelt," see Professors of Germany, "To the Civilized World", *The North American Review* 210, nr. 765 (1919 [1914]): 284–87.

[172] To mention a curious example, which Trond Berg Eriksen cites in a survey of this war-enthusiasm, Freud stated that "I dedicate all my libido to the Austro-Hungarian army." Trond Berg Eriksen, *Freuds retorikk: en kritikk av naturalismens kulturlære* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2000). Symptomatic of the extent to which Barth's narrative is uncritically adopted is the fact that most of the literature misdates the publication of the manifesto to August 1914—following Barth's recollection of its publication on "a black day" in "early August 1914." (The correct date is October 4, 1914.) Barth, "Evangelical Theology," 14. Moreover, in the aforementioned 1934 pamphlet *Nein!*, Barth suggests that Brunner, by yielding to natural theology, was a greater threat to Christianity than those theologians who had allied themselves with the Nazis; see Gary J Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology without Weapons* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 120–24. On the German churches' support for the war, see Woodhead, *Christianity*, 376.

revelation."[173] On this premise, Barth initiated in 1932 a monumental ecclesial and dogmatic project, in which he rethought—comprehensively, consistently, and with astonishing erudition—Christianity as an objective and radically Christo-centric theology.[174]

A final point that merits our attention in this connection is that theology, according to Barth, incessantly calls for a crisis of culture. Coming suddenly and "vertically from above," like "a flash of lightening," revelation strikes the human being like "the crater made at the percussion point of an exploding shell," in "a void," a "hollow space."[175] And since it is transient, it cannot be preserved; in Gregersen's words, "it does not leave the bomb crater." This means, Gregersen contends, that "the locus of theology is in the *ruins* of culture."[176] It could also be argued, as does Woodhead, that for Barth, theology was "somehow located above both culture and society."[177] In either case, Barth depicts a dissonant relation between theology and culture: God's word is "the great disturbance" that plunges humans into *krisis*.[178]

On this issue, Friedrich Gogarten's statements are particularly telling. Like Barth—and in equally stark terms—Gogarten asserted that theology stands in an antagonistic relation to

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[173] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters Papers from Prison* (Simon and Schuster, 2011), 280, 286, 329. Also, Bonhoeffer's designation refers to Barth's provocative claim that revelation reveals its truth by itself. By the same token, it is not only the criterion of truth, but also provides the basis for epistemology and knowledge. This provided Barth with an answer to the question of whether his radical "disconnection" of God from everything human rendered God humanly irrelevant, thus leaving theologians with no basis for speaking about God: we can (as Woodhead summarizes) "know something about God solely because God […] reveals himself in the Word." Woodhead, *Christianity*, 377. In effect, Barth established, as it were, a "theological haven," unfalsifiable and immune to criticism from outside, not least by placing, as McCormack puts it, "God's reconciling activity in Christ beyond the reach of historical investigation, and faith beyond the reach of psychological investigation." McCormack, *Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 182.

[174] Having turned in an ecclesial and dogmatic direction during the latter half of the 1920s, Barth did so in his massive *Church Dogmatics*, the first volume of which appeared in 1932. In the course of this project, which he was still working on at his death in 1968 (after having written no less than nine thousand pages), Barth did in fact become less radical in his claim of "God's no" to all that is human; see Gregersen, "Protestant theology," 25. The question of the phases of Barth's development—particularly whether his church dogmatics implies a turning away from his early crisis-theology—is much debated in Barthian scholarship. For a detailed review of this debate, see McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*.

[175] Barth, *Romans*, 29, 254.

[176] Gregersen, "Protestant Theology," 23.

[177] Woodhead, *Christianity*, 377. The same applies to the church, Woodhead argues with reference to the famous Barmen declaration of 1934, which, principally authored by Barth, proclaimed the church's distance from all worldly affairs. See also Tillich's criticism of Barth's grounds for opposing Nazism: "It was not the common fight of people of all religions and creeds against the National-Socialist distortion of humanity that interested him, but the defense of the church as the finger pointing only to heaven and not to earth." Paul Tillich, "Trends in Religious Thought that Affect Social Outlook," in *Religion and the World Order*, ed. F. Ernest Johnson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 24–25; quoted in Gordon, "Weimar Theology," 176.

[178] Barth here draws on the fact that *krisis* can also mean judgment and decision; see chapter 12-15, entitled "The great disturbance," in Barth, *Romans*, 424–526. See also his 1926-lecture "Die Kirche und die Kultur:" "The word of God defines humanity in opposition to God. [It] represents for humanity the problem of its existence. This is the problem of culture. Culture is humanity." Quoted in Russell Re Manning, *Theology at the End of Culture: Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture and Art* (Peeters Publishers, 2005), 27.

culture (or what he also referred to as *Menschenwerk* ("the work of humans")). In opposition to what he regarded as the liberals' cultural dilution of theology, Gogarten stressed that far from being interrelated or interacting with culture, theology is "a constant crisis in this and every culture." Expressing anything but trust in the realm of human affairs, Gogarten's vision of culture and history is emphatically bleak. Indeed, a theology "which has to reconcile itself to the world as it is […] is itself drawn into the contingencies from which it should be freeing us, and it will dance the insane dance of world history."[179] Likewise, in the aforementioned 1920 essay "Between the Times," Gogarten repeatedly speaks of the "distrust of all that is human [*das Menschliche*]," or, to quote one of his muscular expressions: "we have become distrustful right to our fingertips of everything which is in any way the work of man [*Menschenwerk*]."[180]

Barth's juxtaposing of God and the brokenness of humanity—of the "Otherness of God by which the whole realm of humanity is confronted and dissolved"—was connected to a re-emphasizing of the doctrine of sin.[181] What is important from our perspective is that his outlook on human nature and the realm of human affairs was somber. Also in this case, Barth reacted against liberal traditions, criticizing them for having an unduly and misguided trust in human nature and abilities, a sanguine, Pelagian-like confidence that humans are capable of effecting or overcoming (totally or partially) their sinfulness. In opposition, Barth invoked the Reformers and Kierkegaard (in whose writings sin and guilt loom large), repeatedly stressing the all-embracing character of sin. In doing so, Barth, as David Fergusson observes, "recalled Calvin's doctrine of total depravity in which all human activity, including religion, is such that even our best is flawed."[182] A few quotations suffice to illustrate this somberness: elevating the doctrine of original sin, Barth asserted that it is "not merely one doctrine among the many," but rather "THE doctrine which emerges from all honest study of history." That is, "we are, and remain, homeless in this world; sinners we are and sinners we remain; […] the word 'history' implies limitation and corruption."[183] In another passage, Barth advances the idea that individual acts of sin are caused by a general sinfulness—that sin causes sin: "Sin is that by which man as we know him is defined […]. The actual sins of the individual man are means by which the general situation is more or less clearly made known.

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[179] Friedrich Gogarten, "The Crisis of Our Culture," in *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, ed. James M Robinson, trans. Keith R. Crim, vol. 1 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1920), 291.
[180] Friedrich Gogarten, "Between the Times," in *Beginnings of Dialectical Theology*, ed. James M Robinson, trans. Keith R. Crim, vol. 1 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1920), 279.
[181] Barth, *Romans*, 278.
[182] David Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 22.
[183] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 85–86 (capital letters in original).

Particular sins do not alter the status of a man; they merely show how heavily the general dominion of sin presses upon him."[184] By the same token, Barth stresses the equality or sameness of this generic sin. For example, alluding to Augustine's famous hospital metaphor, he rhetorically asks: "Are we not all patients in one hospital? Do we not all stand under one accusation?"[185]

As Peter Gordon observes, "Barth's disillusionment with all historical categories" might seem to align his Roman commentaries with contemporary "anti-liberal exponents of historical pessimism such as Oswald Spengler," as well as with "sociologists of disenchantment such as Simmel and Weber." However, there is a noteworthy difference: Barth "wished to clear away the fog of historical reasoning—to see 'through and beyond history'—only in order to better fix his sights on the eternal spirit." Nonetheless, Gordon continues, "this utter disregard for historical categories ironically drove Barth to embrace a similarly bleak vision of history as evacuated of meaning. Indeed, Barth's image of an utterly transcendent God seemed to *presuppose* rather than challenge the Weberian vision of the modern world as a mechanistic system lacking any sources of immanent purpose." Thus, in *Romans*, "Barth was driven to conclude that from the eschatological point of view no merely human advantage or effort held any value whatsoever."[186]

1.2.2: From the Theology of Crisis to Existential Theology and Phenomenology, or, from Barth to Heidegger: Arendt as a Student of Bultmann

Between 1924 and 1926, when Arendt studied with Bultmann, the theological climate at Marburg was dominated by the "Barthian revolt." This is confirmed by the Lutheran German-American theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965), who was at Marburg from 1924 to 1925, and who later became Arendt's friend.[187] Recalling his time at Marburg, Tillich stressed the theological exclusion of social and cultural issues: "During the three semesters of my teaching I met the first radical effects of the neo-orthodoxy on theological students: cultural problems were excluded from theological thought; theologians like Schleiermacher, Harnack, Troeltsch, Otto, were contemptuously rejected; social

[184] Barth, 167.
[185] Barth, 465.
[186] Gordon, "Weimar Theology," 158.
[187] Arendt befriended Tillich in Frankfurt in 1929, and subsequently when they both ended up in the United States. Remarkably, their friendship was not due to mutual admiration for each other's work—quite the contrary; see Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: for Love of the World*, 241. Like Bultmann, Tillich became one of the most influential proponents of existential theology, but of a profoundly different, socially, and socialistically oriented character. I have adopted the phrase "Barthian revolt" from Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*.

and political ideas were banned from theological discussions. The contrast with the experiences in Berlin was overwhelming."[188]

At the beginning of his career, Bultmann had belonged to the school of *Religionsgeschichte* ("the school of the history of religions"), a rationalistic branch of liberal theology that made pioneering use of scientific historical methods. Soon, however, Bultmann began to move toward the Barthian movement. When the second edition of Barth's *Romans* came out in 1922, Bultmann reviewed it sympathetically, appreciating especially Barth's criticism of psychologism and historicism. Likewise, he wrote to a friend that Barth's work had "made a very strong impression on me."[189] In a reflection on his career written in 1956, Bultmann described what he saw as the basic insights and merits of Barth's work and the dialectical movement: "[I]t was rightly recognized, as over against the 'liberal' theology out of which I had come, that the Christian faith is not a phenomenon of the history of religion, […] and that therefore theology does not have to look upon it as a phenomenon of religious or cultural history." Instead, "the new theology had correctly seen that Christian faith is the answer to the word of the transcendent God."[190] Similarly, in his 1924 essay "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement," Bultmann distanced himself from liberal theology and what he labeled its "pantheism of history," asserting that faith is "totally unattainable with the assistance of scientific knowledge," and that accordingly the task of theology was to "free piety from the completely untenable bond with history." Echoing Barth and Gogarten, he declared that "God means the radical negation and overcoming of everything human."[191]

Yet during the second half of the 1920s, Bultmann increasingly differentiated himself from Barth; and already by the end of the decade, Bultmann had turned in an existentialist direction—not least due to his close intellectual partnership with his new colleague, Martin Heidegger. In Heidegger's Marburg years (from 1923-28), they met regularly and read texts together, such as Kierkegaard, Paul, and the Gospels of John. Also, Heidegger appeared as a guest speaker in Bultmann's seminars.

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[188] Werner Schüßler, "Tillich's Life and Works," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.
[189] Bultmann in a letter of 1922 to Hans von Soden; as quoted in Konrad Hammann, *Rudolf Bultmann: A Biography*, trans. Philip E. Devenish (Oregon: Polebridge Press, 2013), 136.
[190] Rudolf Bultmann, "Autobiographical Reflections," in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden (London: Collins, 1973), 340.
[191] Rudolf Bultmann, "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement," in *Faith and Understanding*, vol. 1 (Harper & Row, 1924), 29.

1.2.2.1: From Revelation to Mitsein *and the Ethics of the Other: Bultmann on Neighbor and Love of Neighbor*

When Bultmann adhered to the Barthian claim that there is no human point of contact for faith, he also subscribed to Barth's take on neighborly love. Thus, in the 1924 essay referred to above, Bultmann sided with Barth in his dispute against his former teacher Adolf Harnack (1851-1930), a prominent historical theologian and Neo-Kantian proponent of the primacy of ethics and moral reason. In Harnack's reading of neighborly love, "the close conjunction, in fact equation of the love of God and the love of neighbor" indicates that there are no "absolute contradictions [*schlechthin Gegensätze*]" between "God and the world (life in God and worldly life)." Against this position, Bultmann objected that Harnack, by assuming that "we can fulfill God's demands in the historical course of human life," had failed to recognize "the sinfulness of our whole life and activity." By the same token, he endorsed Barth's rejoinder to Harnack: "Precisely the Gospels' combination [*Nebeneinanderstellung*] of love of God and love of neighbor is the strongest indication that the relation between our 'life in the world' and our 'life in God' is a relation of 'absolute contradiction' […]. For is there anything in the world more alien, more incomprehensible, and more in need of God's revelation than exactly a 'neighbor'?"[192]

After having developed his notion of pre-understanding through use of Heidegger's existential analytics, Bultmann significantly changed his account of neighbor and neighborly love. As already mentioned, Heidegger's account of *Mitsein* constitutes, as Peter Probst puts it, "jene Stelle im System Heideggers, an der sowohl der Mangel einer Ethik spürbar wird als auch die Basis für einschlägige Überlegungen gegeben ist."[193] The latter—taking *Mitsein* as the basis and point of departure for moral considerations—was exactly what Bultmann did in his reinterpretation of neighborly love. As he put it in an essay of 1930:

> The neighbor is one who is always there already [*immer schon da ist*], whom I always have already, and whom I do not first need to seek. The situation is therefore not that men stand as isolated subjects in the world as in an empty space […]. It is not that the man must ask how he comes to the other […]. Rather, my being is from the outset a being with others: human being is being with others [*Miteinandersein*].[194]

[192] Bultmann, 43; trans. modified. For a discussion of these contrasting positions, see Chacón, "Hannah Arendt in Weimar: Beyond the Theological-Political Predicament?," 86–87.
[193] Probst, "Mitsein."
[194] Rudolf Bultmann, "To Love Your Neighbour," trans. R. Gregor Smith, *Scottish Periodical* 1 (1947): 44.

Accordingly, Bultmann defined moral action as "that action which […] concerns our being together [*Miteinandersein*]." Such action "fulfills, in its performance [*Vollzug*], the claim which the Thou signifies for me."[195] Thus, with reference to Heidegger's distinction between instrumental / teleological activities (*techne*) and actions that are ends in themselves (*praxis*), Bultmann argued that neighborly love exists only as pure *praxis;* that is, it is not teleologically determined by an ethical ideal, but rather it comes into being in the performance of the act.[196] Reflecting the "primary connection [*Verbundenheit*]"—"that human being is being with others"—the demand of neighborly love is in Butlmann's reading "based on an understanding of human existence [Dasein] in which man in acting gains the authentic possibility of his being [*die eigentliche Möglichkeit seines Sein im Tut gewinnt*]."[197] This means that the demand of love is ontologically rooted in Mitsein: it "does not arise in Christianity as something completely new in the history of ideas; rather, the self-evident nature of the demand of love in Christianity reckons with the fact that everyone should really know what love is, and everyone knows who his neighbor is when he is told, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*."[198]

While Barth's *Romans* as mentioned constituted the main part of the reading for Bultmann's 1925-26 seminar on "The anthropology of Paul," the records [*Protokolle*] testify to Bultmann's collaboration with Heidegger and his growing differentiation from Barth.[199] Indeed, the records show that the course was designed as a critique of Barth for conceiving of sin and death as purely transcendent concepts—and not as historical [*geschichtliche*] norms and facts. Thus, the aim of the course was "to understand the Pauline anthropology and the concepts of sin and grace in their historical determination." To this end, "the concepts of 'history' [*Geschichte*] and '*Miteinandersein'* ["Being-with-one-another" or "Being together"]" were used as an "adequate and necessary corrective" to Barth's exegesis. "Nach Paulus ist die Sünde kein Charakteristikum der Gattung Mensch, auch nichts Zufälliges des einzelnen Menschen, sondern Tat in der freien Entscheidung des Menschen in seiner Geschichte."[200]

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[195] Bultmann, 43; trans. modified.
[196] On Heidegger's interpretation of the Aristotelian notions of *techne* and *phronesis*, *poiesis* and *praxis*, see Tömmel, *Wille und Passion*, 205-06. Heidegger introduced these distinctions in two series of lectures in 1924-25, in the course of which he also introduced the terms *Miteinandersein* and *Mitsein*; see below.
[197] Bultmann, "To Love Your Neighbour," 52.
[198] Bultmann, 48.
[199] There is a protocol containing 76 handwritten pages with minutes of all the single lectures in this set of lectures. This document is accessible at Archiv der Philipps-Universität Marburg. A two and a half pages extract has been published in Bernd Jaspert, ed., *Sachgemäße Exegese: die Protokolle aus Rudolf Bultmanns Neutestamentlichen Seminaren 1921-1951* (Marburg: Elwert, 1996), 39–42.
[200] Ibid., 40. Lecture held Dec 3, 1925. Keeper of the minutes: Martin Schmidt. In his construal, Bultmann refers to the Adam-Christ typology (Rom 5) of the old versus the new man, of sin versus grace.

Heidegger introduced the term *Miteinandersein* in one of his now famous series of lectures in which he worked on the material that would eventually become *Being and Time*; namely in "Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy," which he delivered at Marburg in the summer term of 1924. In the winter term of 1924-25, Heidegger further developed the term *Miteinandersein*, now also employing the term *Mitsein*. As Taminiaux has explored, these lectures had a major impact on Arendt (as well as on other of the outstanding participants, such as Leo Strauss, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans Jonas, and Karl Löwith).[201] Before considering Arendt's dissertation as a contribution to the controversy over intersubjectivity, I outline Heidegger's account of Mitsein.

1.3: Heidegger and the Controversy over Intersubjectivity

It is not for nothing that Heidegger's position in *Being and Time* on the sociality of the self is disputed; for it is indeed ambiguous. One the one hand, Heidegger's work owes its fame not least to his project of challenging what he identified, in his characteristic meta-narrative manner, as a longstanding solipsistic conception of subjectivity that had been predominant since Descartes (the modern philosopher par excellence and the target of many twentieth century critics, Arendt included). In brief, Heidegger's verdict was that the subject of Cartesian epistemology and ontology confronts the external world—fellow humans included—as a disembodied and disengaged *res cogitans*, which is to say that the isolated subject's relations to others are a "reconstruction," derived from its capacity to represent the world within the boundaries of its own consciousness. This misapprehension was still in effect, Heidegger indicted, in his mentor, the founder of modern phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938): despite his advancing the term *intersubjectivity*, Husserl remained stuck in the Cartesian paradigm, as he similarly conceptualized relations to others as a reconstruction resulting from the isolated subject's empathy [*Einfühlung*].

Against this backdrop, Heidegger set out to establish a social ontology centered on a more engaged and practically involved concept of being-in-the-world [*in-der-Welt-sein*]. As Heidegger's peculiar terminology serves to underline, the self is always already—prior to any "theorizing"—worldly immersed: its being is *Dasein* [*being-there* or *being-here*].[202] By implication, the self is primordially social: it is always already in the world *with* others. In Heidegger's words, "This 'with' is of the character of Dasein […]. Due to this *with-bound* [*mithaften*] being-in-the-

[201] Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker*, 42–46.
[202] The adverb *da* denotes both a spatial location and a temporal location; cf. "DWDS – Da," accessed August 31, 2018, https://www.dwds.de/wb/da. The *sein* in Dasein is a verb infinitive, not a substantive (*Sein*), that is, it means "to be."

world, the world is always already one I share with others. The world of Dasein is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is being-with others [*Mitsein*]. The innerworldly being-in-itself of others is *Dasein-with* [*Mitdasein*]."[203] The latter is to say that whereas *Mitsein* "is an attribute of one's own Dasein," *Mitdasein* "characterizes the Dasein of others."[204] At the same time, *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein* are interrelated: "Being-with is such that the disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit*] of the Dasein-with of others belongs to it." Thus, where Dasein is one's own-most being, Mitsein concerns Dasein's relation to Mitdasein; and this again points to Heidegger's basic claim: "that the understanding of others already lies in the understanding of the being of Dasein because its being is being-with."[205]

Heidegger's basic move was thus to render intersubjectivity primordial and constitutive of individual Dasein, thereby "reversing" the base of intersubjectivity. Others are not constituted by the individual's consciousness or the so-called transcendental ego—quite the opposite: "the being-in-the-world of Dasein is essentially constituted by Mitsein."[206] Or as Heidegger famously put it in one of his most direct charges of Husserl: "'Empathy' does not first constitute Mitsein, but is first possible on its basis."[207] What Heidegger did, in other words, was to "ontologize" intersubjectivity, to treat it ontologically in the framework of his so-called "fundamental ontology."

As to Heidegger's way of ontologizing, it is crucial to note that whereas ontology in many theories is linked to ethics, he insisted that his fundamental ontology was based on a purely descriptive analysis of existence-structures. In his terminology, he conducted an existential-ontological analysis, as distinguished from existenti*e*l [*existenziell*] and *ontic* analyses. An existential [*Existenzial*], then, is a formal and generic term, referring to the ontological structures of Dasein. On that account, while Heidegger maintained that phenomenology should take as its point of departure our concrete, everyday "worldly involvement" (and thereby turned phenomenology in a pragmatic and hermeneutic direction), his analysis was eminently abstract.

In terms of the existential of Mitsein, the remarkable consequence Heidegger drew from this was that Mitsein does not depend on the actual ("ontic" or "factual") presence of others:

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[203] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1953), 118. For the most part, I rely on the two standard translations: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Schouten Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010).
[204] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 120–21.
[205] Heidegger, 123.
[206] Heidegger, 120.
[207] Heidegger, 125.

"The phenomenological statement that Dasein is essentially being-with has an existential-ontological meaning […] Being-with existentially determines Dasein even when no others are present and perceived [*vorhanden und wahrgenommen*]."[208] To be sure, later in the same section Heidegger contends that Dasein is not only with others but also *for* others: "As Being-with, Dasein 'is' essentially for the sake of others." Yet, while this sounds like an ethical statement, Heidegger once again stresses that it "must be understood as an existential statement as to its [Dasein's] essence. Even when actual, factual Dasein does *not* turn to others, and thinks it has no need of them or manages to get along without them, it *is* in the mode of being-with."[209] Furthermore, it is worth paying attention to Heidegger's way of defining "others": "By 'others' we do not mean everyone else but me—those from whom the 'I' distinguishes itself. Rather, others are those from whom one mostly does *not* distinguish oneself, those among whom one also is."[210] As emerges, far from being defined in terms of their distinctness or alterity, others are defined rather as the undifferentiated others, in the generic sense that "others of my kind also are [*vorkommen*]."[211]

Moreover, an important reason for the ambiguity of Heidegger's position is that despite his insistence on the purely descriptive character of his analysis, he did nonetheless make apparently normative distinctions and employed terms with marked ethical connotations. Preeminently, he did so in his famous triad of *Sorge* (care), *Besorgen* (concern), and *Fürsorge* (solicitude). Linking Mitsein to a distinct formation of *Sorge* (the existential term Heidegger introduced to underline that Dasein's most fundamental outlook is given by its primordial, worldly embeddedness), Heidegger contended that whereas *Besorgen* denotes a form of Sorge in which Dasein "concerns itself with activities that it performs and things that it uses," *Fürsorge* is directed to others.[212] As the preposition *für* (for) indicates, it signifies Dasein's care for others. In addition, *Being and Time* does in fact contain sporadic remarks that give resonance to ethical connotations, for instance when Heidegger refers to Dasein "as Being-with for the other […] as in hearing the voice of a friend whom every Dasein carries with it."[213] Yet if Heidegger intimated ethical implications to his account of intersubjectivity and his differentiation of intersubjective relations (*Fürsorge*) from subject-object relations (*Besorgen*), he did not, as Moyn observes, underpin it;

[208] Heidegger, 120.
[209] Heidegger, 123.
[210] Heidegger, 118.
[211] Heidegger, 120.
[212] Frank Schalow and Alfred Denker, *Historical Dictionary of Heidegger's Philosophy* (Lanham.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 78; cf. pp. 85 and 257.
[213] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 163.

indeed, he explicitly "renounced" it, stressing that his account was descriptive and his distinctions non-hierarchical.[214] Hence, Heidegger could claim that "Being for-, against-, and without-one-another, passing-one-another-by, not-mattering-to-one-another, are possible ways of solicitude. And precisely the last-mentioned modes of deficiency and indifference characterize the everyday and average being-with-one-another."[215] But as Moyn points out, "Heidegger could not, on the terms of his own theory, explain why these are deficient."[216]

Now, as the last Heidegger-quotation indicates, he associated Mitsein with indifference and averageness, that is, a conformist, unreflective, and "undecided" way of existing (along the lines of Kierkegaard's sarcastic portrayal of a bourgeois philistine [*spidsborger*]). In Heidegger's lexicon, this is the inauthentic [*uneigentlich*] mode of being of *das Man* ["the they" or "the one"]. Authentic existence, in turn, is linked to *Selbstsein* ["being one's self" or "being a self"]. The juxtaposition of *Mitsein* and *Selbstsein* is highlighted in the telling title of the chapter: "Being in-the-World as Being-with and Being One's Self: The "They."[217] As the title indicates, Heidegger's main interest and target is the analysis of *das Man.* And where Heidegger with his concept of Mitsein sought to overcome solipsism, it re-emerges, as Löwith objected already in 1928, in Heidegger's notions of *Selbstsein* and *mineness* [*Jemeinigkeit*]. As we shall see, the way to *Selbstsein* and authenticity goes through "the call of conscience [*der Ruf des Gewissens*]" to acknowledging one's being guilty [*Schuldig-sein*]; but for now, it suffices to say that becoming a self is a solitary undertaking: it essentially requires that one distantiates oneself from sociality—particularly, public forms of sociality. To do so, however, is no easy task. This is because of Dasein's *Verfallenheit* ["fallenness"]: its inclination to become immersed in the mode and structure of *das Man*, which pervades to the public sphere *in toto*. As Heidegger famously and controversially put it: "Distantiality, averageness, and leveling down, as ways of being of the they, constitute what we know as 'publicness.' […] [Publicness] is insensitive to every difference of level and genuineness. By publicness everything gets obscured, and what has been covered up gets passed off as something familiar and accessible to everybody." Under these anonymizing conditions, *das Man* "is everywhere," which is to say that *das Man* is, as it were, at once everybody

[214] Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 66. The latter has to with Heidegger's so-called "destruction of onto-theology" and its metaphysical hierarchy and graduation of different degrees of being. Moyn also comments on Heidegger's distinction between people and things, but he is not quite accurate on this point, as he presents it not as a distinction between two formations of the Sorge-structure (that is, *Fürsorge vs. Besorgen*), but instead as *Sorge* vs. *Fürsorge*.
[215] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 121.
[216] Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 65.
[217] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 113.

and nobody: "Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The *they*, which supplies the answer to the *who* of everyday Dasein, is the *nobody* to whom every Dasein has already delivered itself, in its being-among-one-another [*Untereinandersein*]."[218]

1.3.2: Grappling with *Mitsein* and *in-der-Welt-sein*: Arendt's Dissertation on the Concept of Love in Augustine as a Response to Heidegger

> What I want to tell you now is nothing but, at heart, a very frank assessment of the situation. I love you as I did on the first day [...]. The path you showed me is longer and more difficult than I thought. [...] The solitude of this path is self-chosen and is the only way of living given me. But the desolation that fate has kept in store not only would have taken from me the strength to live in the world, that is, not in isolation; it also would have blocked my path, which, as it is wide and not a leap, runs through the world for me. (Arendt in a letter to Heidegger, April 22, 1928.)

As Tatjana Tömmel observes in her remarkable book on the concepts of love in Arendt and Heidegger, this early letter from Arendt to Heidegger (the first still extant) reads like a programmatic statement of Arendt's thought.[219] Written at a time when she was grappling not only with *Being and Time*, but also with the question of the ethical and social relevance of Augustine's account of love, Arendt indicates, as Tömmel points out, "that her own path would go 'through the world', instead of overleaping it at a single bound—into faith, into being, or into nothingness." Thus, already at the age of 21, Arendt seemed to have made up her mind, as Tömmel notes, "that the trajectory not only of her life, but also of her thought, must not take place 'in isolation', but must regain [*widergewinnen*] the world."[220]

In this section, I inquire into Arendt's dissertation, arguing that it can be seen as a series of critical reflections on the Heideggerian notions of *Mitsein* and *in-der Welt-sein.* In doing so, I subscribe to Moyn's claim that Arendt engaged critically with Heidegger's account of intersubjectivity already in her dissertation. However, as outlined in the introduction, while acknowledging the originality and importance of Moyn's claim, I argue that Arendt did not reply to Heidegger in the way Moyn suggests.

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[218] Heidegger, 128. The German preposition *unter* can both mean "among" and "under" / "below." The latter resonates with the condition of *das Man*: *Verfallenheit* ["fallenness"].
[219] Tatjana Noemi Tömmel, *Wille und Passion. Der Liebesbegriff bei Heidegger und Arendt* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013), 199.
[220] Tömmel, 199.

Renowned as a political theorist, it may seem surprising that Arendt wrote her dissertation on the concept of love in Augustine. However, considering her interest in theology, philosophy, and classics, it was actually not a surprising choice of topic. Furthermore, Augustine was attracting increasing interest, not only in theology, but also in philosophy. One of the explanations for this resurgent interest was occasional: the celebration in 1930 of the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of Augustine's death. In this year, Arendt wrote an essay entitled "Augustin und der Protestantismus," in which she points to what might well be another explanatory factor behind Augustine's appeal in interwar Germany: that he stood "at the very border between declining antiquity and the rise of the Middle Ages."[221] Thus, Augustine could be identified with as a thinker in a time of crisis, living, in Arendt's later phrase, in the "gap between past and future."[222] In her postwar writings, Arendt made explicit such an identification with Augustine, stating for example in a 1954 essay that he "wrote under the full impact of a catastrophic end which perhaps resembles the end to which we have come."[223] That Augustine lived in such a transitional period resulted in a number of tensions.

In her dissertation, which Arendt submitted in 1928, and which came out as a book in 1929, Arendt pays considerable attention to these tensions in Augustine's thought, emphasizing that he was both a Roman and a Christian. By the same token, she explores (clearly inspired by Heidegger) the impact of Augustine's appropriation of Greek categories, focusing on the tension between the other-worldliness of Neo-Platonism and the demand to love one's neighbor. Her *Erkenntnisinteresse* is not theological; rather, it is an investigation into the interpersonal, ethical, and social-communal implications of Augustine's theology. Yet even if her *Erkenntnisinteresse* is not theological, she does in fact think theologically; as Eric Gregory remarks, she "pursues the internal logic of Augustinian Christianity," trying to "think with Augustine against Augustine."[224] In other words, she offers, as John Kiess notes, an immanent critique, asking "how well Augustine succeeds in accounting for the neighbor."[225]

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[221] Hannah Arendt, "Augustinus Und Der Protestantismus," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, no. 902 (1930): 12; Hannah Arendt, "Augustine and Protestantism," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn, trans. Rita & Robert Kimber (New York: Schocken, 1994), 24–27.
[222] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), 3.
[223] Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," 308.
[224] Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love*, 221. See also Breidenthal, "Jesus Is My Neighbor," 490–91.
[225] Kiess, *Hannah Arendt and Theology*, 18.

To leave "all dogmatic elements" out of consideration is justifiable, Arendt argues, because it is in keeping with Augustine's claim regarding the universality of the maxim "Do not do to another what you do not wish to have done to you." Preceding "the express [*ausdrücklich*] commandment of neighboring love" and "all specifically theological interpretation," this maxim is not culturally specific nor contingent upon any specific denomination.[226] Rather, it is the phenomenological (or in Arendt's words, "pre-theological") basis of cultural and religious expressions—such as the commandment of neighborly love.[227] In other words, it springs from the elementary "Miteinander der Menschen" and "Beisammensein und Aufeinanderangewiesensein der Menschen untereinander."[228] The Christian principle of neighborly love, Arendt proceeds, "wird dann weiter als ein ganz bestimmter und besonders ausdrücklich gewordener Bezug zum Du erklärt."[229] (Rather remarkably, Arendt does not note that this principle is in fact of Jewish origin.)[230]

In support of her approach, Arendt quotes Augustine's insistence that the maxim "cannot be varied in any way by any national diversity of customs." This is to say, Arendt contends, that it is "independent of any such explicit revelation as has become real in Christ." Furthermore, she points out that for Augustine, the neighbor is "every man." Notably, this means that Arendt's guiding question in her exploration of Augustine is not confined to considering the relevance of the neighbor as a co-religionist within a community of faith; rather, it is the neighbor as he or she appears in the world common to all humans. (For this reason, she uses the terms *neighbor* and *the other* synonymously.) In other words, it involves a consideration of interhuman relations in

[226] In support, Arendt quotes Augustine's insistence that this maxim "cannot be varied in any way by any national diversity of customs." This is to say, Arendt contends, that it is "independent of any such explicit revelation as has come real in Christ." Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 25. Copy A, 244-45.
[227] Arendt, 25. Samuel Moyn makes a similar observation about Arendt's appeal to a "universal human phenomenology." Yet his reading is slightly inaccurate, as he misses Arendt's distinction between neighborly love and the universal maxim. This leads Moyn to suggest that what Arendt identifies as the universal is "what people could or should already know through introspection." But this is rather Augustine's elaboration on the universal maxim in his interpretation of neighborly love as an inner law; the maxim itself is for Arendt a matter of intersubjectivity, independent of introspection. Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 80–81.
[228] Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 25 & 50–51 n. 66. As we shall see, this is strikingly similar to Arendt's attempt, in her reflections on forgiveness, to distil "aspects of the teaching of Jesus which are not primarily related to the Christian religious message but sprang from experiences in the small and knit community of his followers." Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239.
[229] Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 50–51 n. 66.
[230] See Leviticus 19:18: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." I return to this issue below.

Augustine's thought universally conceived—or what could also be called a reflection on intersubjectivity.[231]

On these grounds, Arendt limits "the scope of interpretation in two ways […]. First, we shall ask about this pre-theological sphere. Second, we shall seek to grasp what Augustine's exegesis would regard as the specific novelty in the Christian elaboration. Here, the postulated and claimed reality of a human life is […] subjected […] to the law of God, which commands from the outside."[232] But why should this divine law "be the only way to its own truth," asks Arendt, maintaining that for Augustine, "authority commands from without what we would also be told by conscience, the inner law, if habit had not ensnared us in sin."[233]

Based on an identification of three distinct contexts [*Zusammenhänge*] in which Augustine reflects on love, the dissertation falls into three parts, each of which, Arendt explains, "are linked only by the question of the other human being's relevance [*der Relevanz des Anderen*]."[234] In all of these parts, Arendt's conclusion is that the precedence that Augustine gives to the love of God, the otherworldly, and the eternal serve to mediate—or rather, to obscure—the concrete encounter with other humans in their specific individualities.

It is worth noticing what Arendt does not mention: that the demand to "love your neighbor as yourself" is in fact of Jewish origin.[235] Furthermore, in Christian and Jewish traditions alike, the question as to what counts as a neighbor has been (and still is) disputed: does neighborly love apply only to persons whom I concretely encounter? Is *neighbor* a universal category, including "every man" (as in Arendt's interpretation of Augustine), or is it an exclusive category, depending on one's religious, communal, or ethnic affiliation? Among the Protestant Reformers, a

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[231] Copy A, 244-45; Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 25. On the universality of Arendt's inquiry, see also Spengeman's thoughtful comments: Sarah Elizabeth Spengeman, "Saint Augustine and Hannah Arendt on Love of the World: An Investigation into Arendt's Reliance on and Refutation of Augustinian Philosophy" (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame, 2014), 192.

[232] Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 25. Copy A, 244. Cf. Arendt, 23. Copy A, 242: "For it is written, 'Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself,' and only one seized by god's love is able to do so."

[233] Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 26. Copy A, 245.

[234] Arendt, 24. Copy A, 242.

[235] Cf. Leviticus 19:18: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The fact that this, to my knowledge, is not pointed out in the commentary literature either is probably expressive of how widespread it is to refer to neighborly love as a specifically Christian principle. Furthermore, the Golden Rule exists in many different religion and cultures. See Markus Mühling et al., "Love of One's Neighbor," *Religion Past and Present*, April 1, 2011, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/religion-past-and-present/love-of-ones-neighbor-COM_024004?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.religion-past-and-present&s.q=love+of+neighbor; Hans-Jürgen Becker, Johan C. Thom, and Wilfried Härle, "Golden Rule," *Religion Past and Present*, April 1, 2011, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/religion-past-and-present/golden-rule-COM_08818; Peter Gerlitz et al., "Liebe," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 21 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 121–91.

shared view was that the love of one's neighbor is "beyond human reach after the fall and before justification [*Rechtfertigung*]"; hence Luther's exposition of neighborly love: "love your neighbor as you now wrongly love yourself."[236] Moreover, it should be noted that neighborly love is not a political idea, and historically it has not been implemented as a political or judicial principle in Christian countries. In other words, it has not, for example, resulted in equal rights for citizens.[237] What I am heading at is that Arendt's sensibility to and concern with universalism can be read in light of her Jewish background; indeed, such a concern was well-stablished in the German-Jewish tradition since G.E. Lessing.[238] This goes without saying that knowing what was about to happen in Germany adds a tragic flavor to reading Arendt's endeavors to detect a common ground for community and human co-existence in the Christian church father.

In his assessment of Arendt's dissertation, Jaspers wrote: "Neither historical nor philological interests are primary. The impulse comes rather from what is left unsaid: through philosophical work with ideas the author wants to justify her freedom from Christian possibilities which also attract her." Now, the same applies to Heidegger's existential analytics: while there is only one explicit reference to Heidegger, the dissertation is filled with Heideggerian prose and notions, with which Arendt is wrestling. On top of that, one could arguably say that Heidegger also "through philosophical work with ideas [he wants to] justify his freedom from Christian possibilities which also attract" him—this in the sense that he derived many of his concepts from Christian motifs, while declaring them to be non-theological.

As outlined in the introduction, Moyn's basic claim is that Arendt's rejoinder to Heidegger took the form of a "crypto-theological ethics" of the other; an ethics premised on the fact that for Augustine—unlike Heidegger—the individual's preoccupation with her own authentic being ultimately leads to experiencing something outside of herself, albeit an encounter with a divine other.[239] Hence, Moyn concludes that "to correct Heidegger's solipsism, Arendt appealed to a philosopher who maintained the importance […] of being otherworldly in the world."[240]

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[236] Mühling et al., "Love of One's Neighbor."
[237] In Germany the tragic irony was that, formally, equal rights were established in the Weimar Constitution.
[238] The most prominent proponent was Hermann Cohen, who attempted to demonstrate "the universal meaning of Judaism for the culture of humanity." Chacón, "Hannah Arendt in Weimar: Beyond the Theological-Political Predicament?," 78–81. See also Svante Lundgren and Paul Milkman, *Particularism and Universalism in Modern Jewish Thought* (Binghamton: Global Academic Publishing, 2001), 69–74.
[239] Arendt "surreptitious reliance on theology," Moyn sees as bearing resemblance to Levinas' later account of the other (which Moyn argues is a secularization of a certain notion of revelation conceived in Protestant theology in Weimar Germany). Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 78 & 82.
[240] Moyn, 84.

However, that the individual's being before God should constitute or point to a kind of intersubjectivity is an option Arendt explicitly rejected. Thus, Arendt repeatedly speaks of "man's absolute isolation in God's presence," an isolation demanded by one's consciousness; and states that there is "no togetherness and no being at home in the world that can lessen the burdens of conscience."[241] Unlike Moyn's suggestion that Arendt corrected Heidegger's solipsism by "deploy[ing] Augustine against Heidegger," my contention is that Arendt primarily criticized Heidegger by criticizing Augustine. By the same token, Arendt deployed Augustine "against himself," in the same way as she did in her critical, transformative appropriations of a number of other thinkers (above all, Heidegger). Thus, my claim is that if Arendt deployed Augustine against Heidegger, she mainly did so by deploying Augustine against himself in ways that simultaneously targeted Heidegger.

In this regard, it is worth noticing that Heidegger drew extensively on Augustine; indeed, several of his analyses in *Being and Time* are often read as secular appropriations of Augustine. This includes not least his accounts of *das Man, Verfallenheit* ("fallenness"), and (the voice of) conscience that demands the individual to withdraw from "inauthentic" being with others in order to quest for his or her authentic being.[242] As to conscience, it is of relevance not only to the question of intersubjectivity, but also for Arendt's charges against Heidegger's conception of *Schuld*. As we will see, for Heidegger's call of conscience to acknowledging one's *schuldig-sein* ("being guilty"), there is no "being at home in the world that can lessen the burdens" either. At least this is Arendt's verdict in her explicit criticism of Heidegger, as we will see in chapter two. Furthermore, Arendt levels the following criticism of Augustine: "Humanity's common descent is its common share in original sin. This sinfulness, conferred with birth, necessarily attaches to everyone. There is no escape from it. It is the same in all people. The equality of the situation means that all are sinful. […] This equality is the predominant fact that wipes out all distinctions."[243] As we shall see, this is homologous with Arendt's criticism of Heidegger, as well as of collective (German) guilt.

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[241] Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 95, 85; Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 97, 88.
[242] More precisely, *das Man* and fallenness are often read as secularized versions of Augustine's account of the human inclination (or "habitus") to live in sinfulness. See Craig JN De Paulo, *The Influence of Augustine on Heidegger: The Emergence of an Augustinian Phenomenology* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).
[243] Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine, Tr. J. Vechiarelli Scott and J. Chelius Stark* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996), 102.

1.4: Bultmann on Forgiveness

In 1926, Bultmann published a book on Jesus, a book which Arendt had a signed version of, filled with underlinings and comments. In this book, Bultmann concluded with a chapter on forgiveness. Bearing in mind the somewhat surprising fact that reflections under the heading of forgiveness were a recent development in theology, arising as part of a general interdisciplinary interest in forgiveness, this was quite unusual.[244] Still more unusual, in attempting to combine existential-phenomenological analysis with Lutheran exegesis, Bultmann carried out what he presented as an analysis of forgiveness in human terms, that is, one in which human-to-human forgiveness was not construed in terms of a mediation by God as a third party. Furthermore, since the focus of his theological interpretation of forgiveness was "strictly vertical," being confined, that is, to the individual human being's relation to God, he also left out of consideration the question of human-to-human forgiveness as mediated by or modelled on God's forgiveness. In both cases, therefore, Bultmann reflected on forgiveness within the conceptual framework of an unmediated I-Thou relationship. While he admittedly did propose a parallelism between divine and human forgiveness, this was not in the traditional sense of mediation; instead, he contended that interhuman forgiveness could clarify [*klarmachen*] forgiveness in the God-self relation.

In effect, however, Bultmann's analysis of the human-to-human relation was clearly carried out with an eye to his view of the God-self relation. In other words, rather than being based on an analysis of concrete human interaction, his account of human forgiveness appeared to be "predetermined" by his Lutheran conception of the individual human being's relation to God. To cite only the most conspicuous indications: echoing the Lutheran reading of the old Adam / new Adam typology, as well as the Lutheran criticism of justification by deeds, Bultmann presented the victim as being in a superior position, and the wrongdoer as wholly at the mercy of the victim. Since "forgiveness cannot rest on any thought of compensation," it is independent of doing penance, showing remorse, or other forms of "post-offense comportment" (my wording): "Only one thing can help him [the offender]—if something new happens," namely that the other forgives him, undeservedly and unexpectedly, "thereby mak[ing] him a new man." Thus, whereas the offense committed by the I "entirely destroyed" the relationship with the Thou, making the I "to the Thou entirely a stranger," forgiveness completely restores the relationship.[245]

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[244] As mentioned, there is no such thing as a doctrine of forgiveness, and until recently, reflections on forgiveness were to be found under the umbrella of the doctrine of reconciliation.

[245] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1926), 137–38; Rudolf Bultmann, "Jesus and the Word," trans. Louise Pettibone Smith, March 4, 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20070304170225/http://www.religion-online.org:80/showchapter.asp?title=426&C=281.

Overall, Bultmann's reflections on forgiveness are markedly different from Arendt's. In opposition to the whole thrust of Arendt's political agenda, Bultmann linked forgiveness to a dyadic relationship of love, intimacy, and privacy—and what is more, he depicted it in a manner that did not appear to be expressive of a human-to-human relationship, but rather to be modeled on his individualist notion of a God-self relation. Thus, as with his dialectical and existential theology in general, his chapter on forgiveness was focused on individual Dasein.

Arendt's response to Bultmann's reflections on forgiveness was not merely oppositional, however; there were also some noteworthy resemblances between their positions. Aside from the fact that Bultmann attempted to deal with forgiveness in human terms, the most noteworthy parallels with Arendt are his definition of forgiveness as a re-establishment of a relationship,[246] his insistence that forgiveness is "a free act, an event," and his claim that forgiveness can never be expected.[247] Moreover, he employed Heidegger's distinction between "the who" and "the what" of a person, so as to argue that forgiveness is independent of the offender's merits and qualities. Although he employed this distinction in an individualistic and much less critical-transformative way than Arendt would later do, it is *ipso facto* of interest that he employed it all, particularly in reflecting on forgiveness. Furthermore, on some points, Arendt's way of adapting this Heideggerian distinction did in fact come very close to Bultmann's: in arguing that forgiveness is unconcerned with "the what" of a person, which is to say that it is "independent of qualities which we may admire or of achievements which we may highly esteem," and similarly, in insisting that "human essence" is independent from "the sum total of qualities and shortcomings in the individual."[248] In Bultmann's Lutheran appropriation, however, human activities *per se* featured among "the what," and, interrelatedly, he adapted Heidegger's binary of in/authentic existence, so as to signify the individual's faith versus unfaith. For Arendt, by contrast, not all forms of human activities featured among "the what;" on the contrary, she maintained that human essence, identity,

[246] As we will see, while this is a common definition in so-called continental thought (which is generally closer to theology), forgiveness in analytic philosophy (and Anglo-American scholarship more generally) is usually defined as the overcoming of resentment. The latter does not necessarily involve re-establishing a relationship, first because the victim in principle can overcome his / her resentment without being in contact with the perpetrator; second because the victim and the perpetrator may not have known each other beforehand (and hence forgiveness cannot be a *re*-establishment of a relationship).
[247] Bultmann, *Jesus*, 138; Bultmann, "Jesus and the Word."
[248] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 193.

and authenticity (alias "the who") are actualized only when human beings engage in certain forms of intersubjective activities.[249]

1.5: The Romantic Flight to the Self

Moreover, in this survey of Arendt's early writings, her post-doctoral work on Rahel Varnhagen and Romanticism (most of which she wrote in Paris exile) is of interest. For one thing, it indicates that even if her dissertation might have struck the reader as a Nietzschean-like renunciation of Christian-Platonic other-worldliness, her alertness to the dangers of solipsism and the debasement of human relationality and community did not rely upon a critique of religion or Christianity. Thus, anticipating what she would later refer to as worldlessness and world alienation, Arendt maintained in her study of Varnhagen and Romanticism that a disregard of, or a lack of responsibility for, the shared life in a common world could take the non-religious form of a "flight into the self [*Flucht in das eigene Innere*]," a flight that she detected in the modern "mania for introspection," intimacy, and sentiments.[250]

This was particularly clear in Arendt's scornful remarks on Rousseau's confessions. According to Arendt, Rousseau did not confess before God, nor before a human mediator (such as a confessor); instead, he confessed himself to "the anonymous future reader, posterity." However, Arendt objected, this was chimerical: posterity was in fact "only the fantasied *foil* of the perceiving inner self."[251] Cut off from intersubjectivity, Rousseau's confessing self was exclusively concerned with introspection, with *intra*-subjectivity—and this, Arendt argued, ruled out the possibility of forgiving. "Posterity would no longer have any power over the life of the strange confessor; it could neither judge [*richten*] nor forgive […]. With the loss of the priest and his judgment [*Urteil*], the solitude of the would-be confessor had become boundless."[252] The confession, that is, took place "within an absolute solitude which no [other] human being and no objective force is capable of piercing."[253] This splendid isolation followed particularly from what Arendt described as a hypochondriac-like obsession with emotions: "The importance of emotions existed independently of possible consequences, independently of actions or motives. Rousseau related neither his life

[249] As we will see, while Arendt does not regard it as the only form of "identity disclosive intersubjectivity," she is concerned above all with a certain political form of intersubjectivity; that is, in her technical term, with action.
[250] Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, ed. Liliane Weissberg, trans. Richard Winston and Clare Winston (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958), 91. Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik* (München: Piper, 2008), 24–25.
[251] Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 1958, 98. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 2008, 34.
[252] Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 1958, 98.
[253] Arendt, 98.

story nor his experiences. He merely confessed what he had felt, desired, wished, sensed in the course of his life."[254] Thus, by "sentimentalizing memory he obliterated the contours of the remembered event;" and "by dissolving it in mood," intersubjective experience was annihilated. In her 1930 essay on Augustine and Protestantism, Arendt took pains to distinguish modern introspection and psychology from Augustine's confessions. Arendt conceded that Augustine's model was also a solitary one, in which "the individual who confesses is thrown back into his own inner life and stands with that inner life revealed before God," thus confessing "to God alone, not to other human beings."[255] However, according to Arendt, the decisive difference was that for Augustine, the individual life "is not valuable because it is one's own and therefore interesting, but because it was bad and has become good." It is of value, then, because it is exemplary: "The individual confession carries a generally applicable meaning: God's grace can enter any and every individual life in this same way. Lives do not have their own autonomous histories; the basic principle of change is conversion." Echoing Luther's anti-scholastic reading of Augustine and the Fall, along with the Barthian movement's proclamation of an absolute divide between God and humanity, Arendt held that such conversion "divides a life into two separate parts. What makes a life worthy of being remembered, what makes it a monument for the Christian, is not any principle immanent in that life itself, but what is wholly other: the grace of God."[256]

As we will see in the following chapter, Arendt's criticism of the modern romantic worship of the self and corresponding neglect of human relationality and community was key to her criticism of Heidegger in general and his notion of guilt in particular: pursuing "the phantom of Self," Heidegger, Arendt indicted in 1946, "is really (let us hope) the last Romantic."[257] Moreover,

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[254] Arendt, 98.

[255] Hannah Arendt, "Augustinus und der Protestantismus," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, no. 902 (1930): 12. Hannah Arendt, "Augustine and Protestantism," trans. Rita Robert Kimber, in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 27. In keeping with standard Protestant narrative, Arendt suggested that Augustine's unmediated confession served as a model for "the Protestant conscience [*Gewissen*]:" "Reaching back over the centuries and past the Catholic era, Luther derived from Augustine his concept of the believer whose conscience stands in a direct relationship with God."

[256] Arendt, "Augustinus und der Protestantismus," 12; Arendt, "Augustine and Protestantism," 26-27. Recall that in the essay and in her dissertation, Arendt tended to appear as an "anti-Protestant Protestant," since her critical claims about Augustine often were based on a rather idiosyncratic Protestantism. As we have seen, moreover, in his 1924 lectures on "the problem of sin in Luther," Heidegger paid attention to the difference between a scholastic and a Lutheran conception of human sinfulness (or *status corruptionis*), highlighting Luther's insistence that the Fall had corrupted human nature completely and that there was therefore a radical gap and discontinuity between pre- and postlapsarian man. Even if the Reformers had agreed that man's salvation is wholly unmerited and effected by grace alone, there was considerable disagreement over how to determine *peccatum originalis* (and its relation to *peccatum actualis*); see Christof Gestrich, *The Return to Splendor in the World: The Christian Doctrine of Sin and Forgiveness*, trans. Daniel Bloesch (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997), 236–45.

[257] Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy," 186-87.

as we will see in chapter 3, Arendt's claim that forgiveness cannot be an *intra*-personal phenomenon points toward her later rejection of self-forgiveness, a rejection she initially formulated in her *Denktagebuch* in 1953, in the course of her intersubjective reinterpretation and approval of forgiveness: "Das eigentlich politische Prinzip der christlichen Liebe liegt im Verzeihen. Dies nämlich kann nicht mehr in die Seele des Einzelnen verlegt werden, dafür bedarf es ein stets einen Anderen. […] [S]ich selbst verzeihen kann niemand."[258] And as we will see in chapter 4, Arendt elaborated on this point in *The Human Condition* and *Vita Activa*, describing self-forgiveness as a sham act: forgiveness "enacted in solitude or isolation remain[s] without reality and can signify no more than a role played before one's self," "like gestures before a mirror." This is because forgiveness "rests on experience which nobody could have with himself," being on the contrary "entirely based on the presence of others."[259]

Conclusion

Inquiring into Arendt's writings from the interwar period, along with her university studies in Weimar Germany and the intellectual climate surrounding her, the purpose of this chapter has been to detect aspects of relevance to her later writings on forgiveness and guilt and the development of her distinctively intersubjective stance. Likewise, the chapter has served to illuminate the question of Arendt's unconventional way of approaching and exploiting theological sources.

A principal finding has been that Arendt was concerned with human relationality and community right from the onset of her career. This is significant for a number of reasons. For one, in showing such a concern and commitment, Arendt did not conform to her Weimar environment, which was indeed dominated by a disregard of political and social issues, not to say a wholesale cultural discontent and "distrust of all that is human" (to repeat Gogarten's proclamation).[260] While the chapter attests to, and elaborates on, the standard reading's characterization of the intellectual atmosphere of Arendt's studies, it shows that Arendt actually dissociated herself from these "unworldliness trends." This suggests that the habitual reference to Arendt's "unworldly youth" is inaccurate. It also lends support to Benhabib's contention that Arendt's "search for the recovery of

[258] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 376 (June 1953): "The real political principle of Christian love lies in forgiveness. This can no longer be located in the soul of the individual—there is always need for another person. […] [N]o one can forgive himself."
[259] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 237–38. Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 232.
[260] Gogarten, "Between the Times," 279.

the public world" was not only a political project, but also a philosophical one in which she "restored 'being-in-the-world-with' […] to the center of our experience of worldliness."[261] At the same time, however, it contests Benhabib's interpretation in terms of when Arendt initiated this project; for in leaving Arendt's dissertation out of concern, Benhabib as mentioned subscribes to the standard reading that Arendt's philosophical project did not arise until she became politically alert and involved. Contesting this point of Benhabib's reading implies adding weight to her claim about the philosophical significance of Arendt's project: this chapter has shown that her project actually started out as an abstract philosophical enterprise before it became an urgent political one.

This is interrelated with another key finding of this chapter: that Arendt already in her dissertation began her critical engagement with Heidegger's account of *in-der-Welt-sein* and his attendant notions of *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt*, and that this constituted the onset of her philosophical project of restoring "'being-in-the-world-with' […] to the center of our experience of worldliness."[262] While there is disagreement as to how Arendt positioned herself to Heidegger, a common feature in the literature on Arendt's intellectual debt to Heidegger is that her dissertation is left unexplored. As we have seen, Moyn is an exception as he contends that Arendt already here judged Heidegger's account of the self to be, in effect, solipsistic and, further, that "to correct Heidegger's solipsism, Arendt appealed to a philosopher [Augustine] who maintained the importance […] of being otherworldly in the world," thereby "attempt[ing] to find a deeper matrix for selfhood in a prior intersubjectivity." Her rejoinder to Heidegger was thus, in Moyn's diagnosis, a "crypto-theological ethics" of the other predicated on a "surreptitious reliance on theology"—a reliance she would later dismiss as she "turned to the secular."[263] This means that whereas Moyn's interpretation is revisionary in arguing that Arendt's critical engagement with Heidegger began already in her dissertation, he subscribes to the standard reading in construing it as a testimony to her initial unworldliness. While my exploration confirmed that Arendt engaged critically with Heidegger in her dissertation, it showed that she did not reply in the way Moyn contends. Rather than correcting Heidegger's solipsism by "deploy[ing] Augustine against Heidegger," as Moyn has it, she criticized Heidegger by criticizing Augustine. Some of her criticism against Augustine she forwarded by deploying Augustine "against himself," similar to her critical, transformative appropriations of a number of other thinkers (above all, Heidegger). Thus, to the extent that she

[261] Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism of Arendt*, 50.
[262] Benhabib, 50.
[263] Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 78, 83, 84; Moyn, "Hannah Arendt on the Secular," 71.

deployed Augustine against Heidegger, she predominantly did so by deploying Augustine against himself in ways that simultaneously targeted Heidegger.

Notably, the chapter showed that this also applies to Heidegger's account of guilt: Arendt's charges against Augustine's notion of original sin targeted Heidegger too and can thus be read as her first critical engagement with his understanding of guilt. The significance of this lies not least in pointing out that her criticism predated Heidegger's Nazi involvement, as well as her political alertness and her postwar criticism of collective (German) guilt. The next chapter will add support to this claim by showing that Arendt's postwar criticism of Heidegger's notion of guilt is homologous with her criticism of Augustine's notion of original sin: in either case, her main concern was that their way of ontologizing culpability resulted in an undifferentiated generic account in which human relationality was rendered secondary, if not wholly erased. And as we will see, the criticism she voiced against Augustine can in fact be used as a concise summary of her postwar verdict of Heidegger's account of guilt: "It is the same in all people. The equality of the situation means that all are sinful. […] This equality is the predominant fact that wipes out all distinctions."[264] What is more, for all her proclamations that totalitarian crimes constituted a radical novelty, a wholly unprecedented phenomenon that altogether defied understanding through traditional "categories of thought and standards for judgment," her criticism of Augustine bears remarkable resemblance to the blurring of guilt she described in her aforementioned 1945 essay, "Organized Guilt."[265] The exploration conducted in this chapter provides a basis for questioning and moderating Arendt's stark claims of the irrelevance of traditional categories to her endeavor to discern totalitarian guilt.

Furthermore, in faulting Augustine's notion of sin for being expressive of a profound distrust in the realm of human affairs, Arendt dissociated herself from her intellectual environment in general and, more specifically, from the renaissance that the doctrine of sin was subject to in Weimar theology—a renaissance that was indeed connected to a "vote of no confidence" in human affairs. Regardless of the validity of her reading of Augustine, it was remarkable, then, that she expressed confidence in, and commitment to, human affairs and community in such an atmosphere

[264] Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine,* eds. J. Vechiarelli Scott and J. Chelius Stark (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996), 102.
[265] Hannah Arendt, "Die Menschen und der Terror" (RIAS Radio University, March 23, 1953); Hannah Arendt, "Mankind and Terror," trans. Robert and Rita Kimber, in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 302. In other words, "we actually have nothing to fall back on in order to understand a phenomenon that nevertheless confronts us with its overpowering reality and breaks down all the standards we know." Arendt, *Origins*, 459.

of cultural discontent. As we saw, Barth elevated the doctrine of original sin to being "THE doctrine," rather than "merely one doctrine among the many."[266] Accordingly, in line with Calvin's doctrine of total depravity and with Luther's reading of Augustine's *peccatum originalis / actualis* distinction, Barth asserted that "Sin is that by which man as we know him is defined […]. The actual sins of the individual man are means by which the general situation is more or less clearly made known. Particular sins do not alter the status of a man; they merely show how heavily the general dominion of sin presses upon him."[267] In sum, "we are, and remain, homeless in this world; sinners we are and sinners we remain," and "restoration is outside our competence."[268] Noteworthy, Barth's account is homologous not only with Augustine but also with Heidegger: culpability is rendered a matter of being rather than doing, a being guilty or being sinful that is used causally to explain individual misdeeds.

Moreover, a main result of this chapter is that in considering Arendt's role in the "controversy over intersubjectivity," one should take into consideration the neglected fact that there was an equally early—or actually even earlier—responder to Heidegger and his account of Mitsein, namely Bultmann. This was discernable already in Bultmann's 1926 book *Jesus,* which Arendt had a copy of filled with marginalia and underlinings, as well as in the notes from the 1925-26 lectures that Arendt attended. Bultmann sought to apply Heidegger's account and unfold its ethical potential by taking *Mitsein* as the point of departure for moral considerations centered on neighboring love. In so doing, he also adapted the distinction Heidegger presented in his 1924-25 lectures on Aristotle between teleological forms of actions (*poiesis*) and actions that are ends in themselves (*praxis*): juxtaposing neighbor love with various forms of "teleological ethics" (being especially alert for instrumentalizing effects of ancient Greek thought and what he labelled "Greek Christianity"), Bultmann maintained that genuine neighbor love exists only as pure *praxis.*

Although Bultmann's employment was not critical-transformative, nor communally oriented, it bears remarkable resemblance to, and constitutes a useful comparative tool for, Arendt's way of exploiting Heidegger's distinction in her later non-instrumental concept of political action and forgiveness as pure *praxis*. And as we have seen, even if Arendt's stance already in her dissertation was more critical and political, her way of responding to Heidegger was strikingly parallel to that of Bultmann on a number of points, not least in that she similarly adapted this

[266] Barth, *Romans*, 85.
[267] Barth, 167. Even if all the Reformers agreed that man's salvation is wholly unmerited, depending on God's grace alone, there was considerable disagreement over how to determine *peccatum originalis* and its relation to *peccatum actualis*; see Gestrich, *The Return to Splendor in the World*, 236–45.
[268] Barth, *Romans*, 85, 168.

distinction and did so too in interpreting neighboring love as pure *praxis*, just as she was suspicious of the instrumentalizing effects of Neoplatonism. By the same token, she followed Bultmann in combining this Heidegger-appropriation with a "Kantian concern" of human dignity, that is, of uncorruptedly taking others into account, as summarized in the maxim of always treating humans as ends in themselves. Arendt, however, questioned whether this was possible if human co-existence is seen as mediated by God as a transcendent third party: far from qualifying or underpinning human dignity (as in traditional theological ethics and the age-old idea that humanity has been created in the image of God),[269] she saw it as debasing the dignity and reciprocity of interhuman relations. In her study of Augustine, she found that his view of human corruption necessitated an otherworldly mediation "through which we recognize ourselves as sharing a [sinful] fate with others."[270] Yet the problem was not only his otherworldly Platonic inheritance; it was interlaced with specifically Christian fundamentals: the doctrines of the Incarnation and the two natures of Jesus Christ. Bringing it to a head, Arendt's assessment was, as Breidenthal puts it, that "if God has become my neighbor, then love of God has outsmarted love of neighbor on its home turf."[271] As we will see, if Arendt in her reading of Augustine's Christology was critically focused on the divinity of the God-man—on Christ at the expense of Jesus, so to speak—it is quite the opposite with her own depiction of Jesus in her writings on forgiveness: here she claimed to be dealing with "Jesus, not Christ."[272]

How did Arendt position herself in her dissertation with regard to the new dialogical thinking, which conceptualized intersubjectivity in terms of an I-Thou relation, and how did she view its relation to Heidegger's account of Mitsein? While Arendt did see neighborly love as an articulation of an I-Thou relation, she claimed it to be a specific form of intersubjectivity within the more general "with-each-otherness of human beings [*Miteinander der Menschen*]."[273] That is, even if not explicitly stated, she differentiated between a "two-way" dialogical account and a Heideggerian account of intersubjectivity. To be sure, she was at this point considerably more sympathetic to neighborly love and to the I-Thou conceptualization than she would be in her later work, in which she deemed these to be unpolitical and irrelevant to the question of a shared life in a common world. Indeed, Arendt's criticism of the (lack of) political and social implications in

[269] Yet this *imagio Dei* motif is arguably at work in her later notion of natality; see below.
[270] Dean Hammer, "Freedom and Fatefulness: Augustine, Arendt and the Journey of Memory," *Theory, Culture & Society* 17, no. 2 (2000): 97.
[271] Breidenthal, "Jesus Is My Neighbor," 491. See also Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love*, 239.
[272] Letter from Arendt to Tillich, April 3, 1958; rpr. in: Hannah Arendt and Paul Tillich, "Hannah Arendt–Paul Tillich. Briefwechsel," eds. Alf Christophersen and Claudia Schulze, *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 9, no. 1 (2002): 144–45.
[273] Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 25; cf. 50–51.

Augustine's account did not concern the political relevance of an I-Thou relation, but rather the fact that Augustine's otherworldly focus corrupted and distorted interhuman relations *per se*—be it I-Thou relations or human relationality more broadly. The fact remains, however, that she interpreted Augustine within a phenomenological framework, in which she presented the I-Thou relation as a "subset" of the general "with-each-otherness of human beings;" and rather than proceeding through dialogical thinking, which was generally confined to (theological) ethics, Arendt was instead engaging and wrestling with Heidegger and the political potential and shortcomings of *Mitsein, Mitwelt*, and *in-der-Welt-sein.*

Humanity's common descent is its common share in original sin. This sinfulness, conferred with birth, necessarily attaches to everyone. There is no escape from it. It is the same in all people. The equality of the situation means that all are sinful. […] This equality is the predominant fact that wipes out all distinctions."[274] Arendt on Augustine.

"It apparently never occurred to Heidegger that by making all men who listen to the 'call of conscience' equally guilty, he was actually proclaiming universal innocence: where everybody is guilty, nobody is."[275] Arendt on Heidegger.

"Just as there is no political solution within human capacity for the crime of administrative mass murder, the human need for justice can find no satisfactory reply to the total mobilization of a people for that purpose. Where all are guilty, nobody in the last analysis can be judged."[276] Arendt on "German guilt."

2: The Burden of Our Time: Arendt's Early Postwar Writings on Guilt and Responsibility

Following the chronological design of the dissertation and the attendant aim of tracing the development of Arendt's thinking on forgiveness and guilt, we now turn to her earliest writings on guilt and responsibility. These writings, we recall, predated her writings on forgiveness: while the inaugural *Denktagebuch* entry of 1950 constituted her first extant meditation on forgiveness, she had already begun to reflect on guilt and responsibility during the war. In these early reflections in the shadow of the Shoah, a key text is the aforementioned essay "Organisierte Schuld [Organized Guilt]," a copy of which Arendt gave to Heidegger when they met in Freiburg in 1950. Written in German in November 1944, the essay appeared in English translation in January 1945 under the title "German Guilt."[277] Of principal interest, too, is Arendt's correspondence with Jaspers, resumed on October 28, 1945, in which they discussed the nature of evil and of Nazism, and the question of (German) guilt and responsibility. In addition to reflecting on guilt and responsibility in connection to concrete historical events, Arendt confronted Heidegger's account of guilt; she did so in her first public evaluation—or rather devaluation—of Heidegger's philosophy, the 1946 essay "What Is Existenz Philosophy?"[278]

Yet, as we have just seen, the onset of Arendt's reflections on culpability can arguably be traced back to her critical encounter with Augustine's account of original sin; thus, two of the

[274] Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine, Tr. J. Vechiarelli Scott and J. Chelius Stark*, 102.
[275] Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 184.
[276] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 126.
[277] More precisely, it was published in *Jewish Frontier*; rpr. and retranslated in *Essays in Understanding*, 121-32, as "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility"). The German version was published in April 1946: Hannah Arendt, "Organisierte Schuld," *Die Wandlung*, 1, no. 4 (1946), 333-44.
[278] Hannah Arendt, "What Is Existenz Philosophy?," *Partisan Review* 13 (1946): 34–56; rpr. as Hannah Arendt, "What Is Existential Philosophy?," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn, trans. Rita & Robert Kimber (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 163–87.

main tasks of this chapter lie in direct continuation of the analysis of her criticism of Augustine's account. I first compare her reading of Augustine with her notion of "organized guilt," and point out that in further developing this notion, she continued to draw on her work on Augustine. This comparison provides a basis for evaluating Arendt's stark claims regarding the irrelevance of tradition to understanding totalitarianism, and for questioning the habitual characterization of her youthful studies as "unworldly" and irrelevant to her political thought. I then show that her criticism of original sin parallels her criticism of Heidegger's account of guilt to a striking extent. Likewise, an interrelated task is to establish the fact that her charges of solipsism against Heidegger are homologous with her charges against Augustine. This line of analysis serves to drive home the argument that Arendt's criticism of original sin and solipsism in Augustine targeted Heidegger too.

Moreover, I contend that Arendt's postwar criticism of Heidegger indicates that her charges against his account of guilt are interrelated with her accusations of solipsism. If she generally deemed his intersubjective aspirations to be defective, and his existential analytics to be, in effect, solipsistic, this was particularly true regarding her verdict on his notion of guilt: it was preeminently in acknowledging one's *schuldig-sein* that the individual is summoned to an inward turn, or what she in 1946 labeled a "preoccupation with Self-ness."[279] This is key to two of the central arguments of my interpretation: that Heidegger's account of guilt constituted an important polemical backdrop to Arendt's thinking on guilt, and that her response to Heidegger's account of guilt is a significant part of her critical-transformative appropriation and "intersubjectification" of Heideggerian categories through her signature concept of plurality.[280] The part of Arendt's response to Heidegger that we deal with in this chapter is, to be sure, purely critical; yet, when turning to her writings on forgiveness from the 1950s, I will develop the argument that she did not simply denounce his account of guilt, but also critically and transformationally adapted it.

In the secondary literature, a common feature is that Arendt's writings from the 1940s are treated alongside her writings from the 1960s (that is, her (in)famous book on the Eichmann trial, which has attracted by far the most attention, and a number of essays, letters, and lecture notes

[279] Arendt, "What Is Existential Philosophy?," 187. The interrelated character of her charges will become even more salient when we turn to her reflections on forgiveness and promise-making in *The Human Condition* and (especially) in *Vita Activa*.

[280] One may wonder why Arendt's critical engagement with Heidegger's notion of guilt has not been explored in the literature on Arendt's debt to Heidegger, and why it is neglected, too, in the voluminous literature on Arendt's writings on guilt and responsibility. One likely reason, I suppose, is that whereas her engagement with Heideggerian guilt was purely abstract, she discussed the issues of guilt and responsibility more concretely, and more controversially, in her reflections on totalitarian crimes.

that she wrote in the wake of the Eichmann controversy). However, I argue that there are notable differences between her characterization of guilt and responsibility in her writings from the 1940s and the 1960s, differences that extend to her distinction between guilt and responsibility, and to the individual and collective level of her conceptualization. [281] In order to demonstrate this, I briefly summarize the main points of Arendt's later writings on guilt and responsibility. Since these later writings are already well-covered in the literature, and since the primary question is how Arendt construes guilt (as *trespassing*) in her writings on forgiveness, I will not go more into these writings.[282] As explained in the introduction, the exploration of Arendt's concepts of guilt and responsibility provides a basis for comparing them with her notion of *trespassing* in her theory of action and forgiveness.

Another common feature in the literature is that Arendt's exchange with Jaspers looms large—and for good reasons: it is an amazing and highly fascinating document in which the two thinkers discuss pressing postwar issues and comment on each other's work. It will not feature quite as prominently in this chapter, however; it is already well-covered, and, as indicated, there are other significant and surprisingly unexplored aspects of Arendt's thinking about guilt.

In what follows, then, I begin by inquiring into Arendt's reflections on guilt and responsibility in connection to the disastrous historical events. After a brief summary of Arendt's well-known and more clear-cut distinction between guilt and responsibility in her later writings, I explore "Organisierte Schuld" / "German Guilt," and then survey her exchange with Jaspers on these issues, including their discussion of Jaspers' 1946 classic *The Question of German Guilt* [*Die Schuldfrage: zur politischen Haftung Deutschlands*].[283] Subsequently, I examine Arendt's confrontation with Heidegger's conception of guilt and her interrelated charge of solipsism. In this examination, her published writings will be supplemented with unpublished and posthumously

[281] While dealing with Arendt's writings from the 1940s and the 1960s in the same breath generally leads to presenting her early reflections as more consistent and thought-through than they actually are, there are also examples of the opposite: that the inconsistencies in "Organized Guilt" are used to criticize Arendt's distinction between guilt and responsibility in general; see e.g. Samantha Ashenden, "The Persistence of Collective Guilt," *Economy and Society* 43, no. 1 (2014): 60–65.

[282] The most recent contribution to the vast literature on guilt, responsibility, and evil in Arendt's Eichmann book and other writings from that period is Deirdre Lauren Mahony, *Hannah Arendt's Ethics* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

[283] The direct translation of the German title and subtitle (which has been left out in the English version) is: *The Question of Guilt: on Germany's Political Liability*. Originally delivered as a serious of lectures at the reopening of Heidelberg University in 1945 and early 1946, it came out in April 1946, at the time of the Nuremberg trials.

published sources: namely, her marginalia in her copy of *Being and Time* and an entry from her *Denktagebuch*.[284]

2.1: **Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility**

Arendt is associated with a sharp distinction between guilt and responsibility; indeed, this distinction is the key argumentative tool in her endeavors to, on the one hand, back away from collective guilt while, on the other hand, avoid ending up in sheer individualism. She advanced her strong distinction in a number of pointed and clear-cut statements in the sixties, arguing that there "is no such thing as collective guilt;" guilt makes sense "only if applied to individuals."[285] This is to say that guilt "always singles out; it is strictly personal."[286] Claims of collective guilt obscure real matters; they conceal concrete deeds conducted by individual human beings. Responsibility, by contrast, can be a collective and political phenomenon. Political responsibility is something we share with others; more precisely, with people belonging to the same political community, such as our compatriots. Accordingly, it can be vicarious and transmitted: we can assume "responsible for things we have not done, […] taking upon ourselves the consequences for things we are entirely innocent of."[287] Thus, as Arendt summarized her argument in a 1968 conference paper, "a sharper dividing line [should be drawn] between political (collective) responsibility, on one side, and moral and/or legal (personal) guilt, on the other."[288]

While Arendt also reacted against the idea of collective guilt in her 1945-essay "German Guilt," her early reflections do not quite conform to her well-known position summarized above. For one, there is the conspicuous difference that she did not propose a collective concept of responsibility predicated on a membership in a political community, but rather an even more far-reaching responsibility—a limitless notion of responsibility—which she termed "universal responsibility." Also, her notion of (organized) guilt is distinct and merits being treated "in its own right." Moreover, I seek to show that even if she reacted against the idea of collective guilt, her

[284] As mentioned, Arendt's personal library is deposited at the Arendt Collection, Stevenson Library, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.
[285] Hannah Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," *The Listener* 72 (1964): 185–87, 205. The quotation is from the extended version published posthumously in Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," 2003, 29.
[286] Hannah Arendt, "Collective Responsibility" (American Philosophical Society, Washington, 1968); rpr.in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 147.
[287] Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," 2003, 157.
[288] Arendt, 150–51.

differentiation between (organized) guilt and (universal) responsibility was unsettled and occasionally dissolved.[289] I start off by examining her characterization of the former.

Organized Guilt

Maintaining that it is mistaken to reject as mere Nazi propaganda the claim that "there is no difference between Nazis and Germans," Arendt contends that we should face that it is supported by "fearful facts," by "real political conditions."[290] She sets herself the task, then, of taking seriously the conditions that "underlie the charge of collective guilt of the German people."[291] In a situation where one "attracts immediate attention by failing either to murder upon command or to be a ready accomplice of murderers," it is difficult and dangerous to avoid getting involved in the Nazi machinery.[292] The Nazi polity has "completely destroyed the neutral zone in which the daily life of human beings is ordinarily lived" and made "the existence of each individual in Germany depend either upon committing crimes or on complicity in crimes."[293] Characterizing the charge of collective guilt as an "inverted version of Nazi racial theory," it is certainly not that Arendt adheres to any such claims.[294] Instead, her contention is that fearful facts gravely challenge our traditional categories of guilt and responsibility and the assumptions on which they are based. The problem is "how to bear the trial of confronting a people among whom the boundaries dividing criminals from normal persons, the guilty from the innocent, have been so completely effaced that nobody will be able to tell in Germany whether in any case he is dealing with a secret hero or a former mass murderer."[295] The core of this horrible novelty is

> the vast machinery of administrative mass murder, in whose service […] a whole people could be and was employed. In that organization […], everyone is either an executioner, a victim, or an automaton […]. That everyone, whether or not he is directly active in a murder camp, is forced to take part […] in this machine of mass murder—that is the horrible thing.[296]

Arendt thus depicts a societally-administratively distributed and imposed guilt. Wrongful deeds are thrust upon ordinary people. Guilt, in other words, appears to be an unavoidable societal condition.

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[289] Bearing in mind that she wrote the essay even before the war was over, it is hardly surprising that her efforts to grasp these intricate questions were searching and her positions not clearly developed; for after all, expecting consistency at the highest level in this situation would be a tall demand.
[290] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 121.
[291] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 124.
[292] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 123-24.
[293] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 124.
[294] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 124.
[295] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 125.
[296] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 126.

Arendt is not quite clear as to whether it is merely difficult or decidedly impossible to avoid becoming guilty under these conditions. If indeed, as she suggests in the quotation above, *everyone* is *forced* to take part in the "organized guilt," then the problem cannot be how to distinguish the guilty from the innocent, but rather how to determine the degree of guiltiness: the individual's share of the organized guilt. That would imply that all Germans are guilty—that is, a collective guilt—albeit to a varying degree.

In either case, what Arendt refers to under the heading of "organized guilt" designates something that challenges our conceptions of guilt, something that cannot be accounted for in traditional categories—a predicament of guilt:

> For systematic mass murder […] strains not only the imagination of humans, but also the framework and categories of our political thought and action. […] There is no political method for dealing with German mass crimes […]. Just as there is no political solution within human capacity for the crime of administrative mass murder, the human need for justice can find no satisfactory reply to the total mobilization of a people for that purpose. Where all are guilty, nobody in the last analysis can be judged.[297]

The predicament is how this guilt can be differentiated and "individualized:" how to single out the individuals behind the misdeeds, behind the administratively organized, collectively committed crimes. This challenges the paradigm that, according to Arendt, "for more than two thousand years [has] been the basis of the sense of justice and right of Occidental man," namely that "[s]o long as punishment is the right of the criminal […] guilt implies the consciousness of guilt, and punishment evidence that the criminal is a responsible person."[298] This seems to merit a specification, for legally speaking, a judgment does not presuppose that the accused person acknowledges his guilt: as Jaspers states in *The Question of German Guilt* (to which we shall return shortly): "punishment requires that the judge acknowledges the guilty man's free determination—not that the punished acknowledge the justice of his punishment."[299] At any rate, Arendt's point is that in organized guilt there is no admission of guilt or recognition of having acted as a responsible person.

To support this interpretation, Arendt cites an interview in a newspaper report with a man who had worked at Maidanek death camp:

> Q. Did you kill people in the camp? A. Yes.
> Q. Did you poison them with gas? A. Yes. […]

[297] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 126. The last sentence bears resemblance to Arendt's criticism of Augustine and Heidegger's accounts of sin and *Schuld* for being undifferentiated; see below.
[298] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 127.
[299] Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E. B Ashton (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 30.

> Q. Did you personally help kill people? A. Absolutely not. I was only paymaster in the camp.
> Q. What did you think of what was going on? A. It was bad at first but we got used to it.
> Q. Do you know the Russians will hang you? A. (Bursting into tears) Why should they? *What have I done?*[300]

Arendt's answer to his question is: "Really he had done nothing. He had only carried out order and since when has it been a crime to carry out orders?"[301] By the same token, Arendt predicts that when the war is over "we will have to listen to a whole chorus calling out, 'We did not do this.'"[302] Thus, as early as November 1944, Arendt anticipated what became a central and disputed issue in postwar confrontations of Nazi participators: the questioning of individual guilt. This questioning was epitomized in the apologetic claims of Nazis—put forward at the Nuremburg Trial, as well as in many later instances, the most notorious example being the trial against Eichmann—of not having acted on their own accounts, of having done nothing but obeyed order, that is, of having been nothing but dutiful citizens, albeit in a criminal state.

In sum, Arendt's concept of organized guilt is sociologically oriented and addresses the "horrible novelty" of the administrative, societally organized character of the Shoah. This is distinct from her famous contention that totalitarian crimes are incommensurable with punishment, or as she put in a 1946 letter to Jaspers (to which we shall return shortly): "The Nazi crimes […] explode the limits of the law."[303] Rather than being a problem of singling out the persons behind the misdeeds or of determining their individual share of the organized guilt, the predicament here lies in the deed itself.

Universal Responsibility

Universal responsibility is predicated on a belief in, and a commitment to, a common humanity, Arendt contends: "the idea of humanity, whether it appears in religious or humanistic form, implies the obligation of a general responsibility;" it has "the very serious consequence that in one form or another men must assume responsibility for all crimes committed by men." This applies to

[300] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 127; Arendt's italics. The report is from Nov. 12, 1944.
[301] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 127.
[302] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 127.
[303] Arendt to Jaspers, August 17, 1946, *Correspondence* 51-56:54. As we shall see, Arendt returns to this problem of proportionality in her chapter on forgiveness in *The Human Condition.* She elaborates on her sociologically oriented analysis in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The latter has been expanded on in contemporary sociology, above all by Zygmunt Bauman in his *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cornell University Press, 1989).

collective subjects too: "all nations share the onus of evil committed by all others."[304] Thus, the concept of responsibility that Arendt advances is indeed universal, not to say limitless.

In Arendt's diagnosis, as of November 1944, the only remains of an insight into universal human solidarity can be traced in what she sees as a purely individual expression of it: "shame at being a human."[305] Such shame, nota bene, cannot be confined to being a German issue exclusively—to a shame at being German—Arendt insists, warning against contenting oneself with "the hypocritical confession 'God be thanked, I am not like that,' in horror of the undreamed-of potentialities of the German national character."[306] However, on the assumption that shame is an individual phenomenon, Arendt maintains that shame is not an "adequate political expression" of universal responsibility.[307] A rehabilitation of the political idea of a common humanity, which implies universal responsibility, is the only bulwark against racial mass murder; for "excluding no people and assigning a monopoly of guilt to no one," the idea of humanity denies the possibility of racial theories. But the more extreme evil that humans commit, the more demanding it becomes to commit oneself to the idea of a shared humanity and to shoulder the burden of responsibility. As Arendt puts it in the midst of the world war, it "becomes daily clearer how great a burden mankind is for man."[308]

Faced with the overwhelming task of this burden, Arendt suggests, in her characteristically unconventional and elective manner, that we can learn from the history of religion; more precisely, from Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement: "Perhaps those Jews, to whose forefathers we owe the first conception of humanity, knew something about that burden, when each year they used to say 'Our father and King, we have sinned before you,' taking not only the sins of their own community but all human offenses upon themselves."[309] Arendt proposes that we "follow this road in a modern version."[310] In the essay, Arendt has not yet developed an account of what this "anti-totalitarian road" consists of, what it implies, and what it requires from us. But in the crescendo of the essay, she states what she sees as its precondition—indeed "the precondition of all modern political thinking:" that we, "in fear and trembling," realize "of what man is capable," the

[304] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131.
[305] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131.
[306] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131. In her concurrent essay, "Approaches to the German Problem," and in her correspondence with Jaspers, Arendt elaborates on her exculpation of German culture and German historical experience; see below.
[307] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131.
[308] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131.
[309] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131-32.
[310] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 132.

"incalculable evil that men are capable of bringing about" and that we accordingly are "filled with fear of the inescapable guilt of the human race."

As should be evident from this quotation, Arendt is not consistent with her distinction between guilt and responsibility. If guilt cannot be collective, how, then, can she claim a generic guilt—an "inescapable guilt of the human race"? Further, regardless of the question as to what extent she dissolves the distinction between guilt and responsibility, her notion of universal responsibility does in itself bear affinity with notions of vicariously acquired sinfulness extending to all humans; recall for instance her assertion that "mankind is a burden for man" since "men must assume responsibility for all crimes committed by men."[311] Also, her depiction of humankind before versus humankind after the death camps bears resemblance with the narrative of the Fall: the common humanity after the death camps appears to be a corrupted one. In accord with what would remain a guiding interpretive principle in her studies of totalitarianism, she insisted that the Shoah was a wholly unprecedented phenomenon, an absolute novelty.[312] This implies that the "inescapable guilt of the human race" is not universally the same throughout human history: it reached a qualitatively different level at a certain point in history. To express it via the analogy of the Fall, Arendt did not situate the origin of original sin in prehistory or at the beginning of history, but within human history (not to say as an eruption in, or interruption of, history). The postlapsarian humanity is a post-totalitarian humanity; the "inescapable guilt of the human race" is the *The Burden of our Time* (as Arendt entitled the first British version of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*).

This forms a link to Arendt's exchange with Jaspers; for as we shall now see, a main point of disagreement was to what extent the Nazi crimes constituted a novelty and, interrelatedly, to what extent they could be described by means of traditional categories of thought.

[311] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131.
[312] As we will see below, she discusses this in her correspondence with Jaspers.

2.2: Arendt's Discussion with Jaspers on Guilt and Responsibility

Commenced in 1926, Arendt's correspondence with her *Doktorvater* (doctoral supervisor), Karl Jaspers, was broken off in September 1938, when Arendt lived in exile in Paris, and resumed shortly after the war; more precisely, on October 28, 1945. When reassumed, their conversation naturally took place against the background of the Shoah, centering on issues such as Nazism, the nature of evil, and the question of (German) guilt. What Arendt in a 1964 interview stated on the relationship between (German) Jews and non-Jewish Germans—that "there should be a basis for communication precisely in the abyss of Auschwitz"—did indeed apply to her relationship to Jaspers; as she said of her dialogue with him: "That was really my most powerful postwar experience. That there can be such conversations!"[313] Their correspondence contributed, as Steven Aschheim observes, to "the genesis and disposition of much of their post-1945 work" and "functioned as a mutually receptive sounding board for their respective ideas."[314] This was not least due to the high level of trust surrounding their dialogue and the fact that they, as Aschheim notes, encouraged self-questioning.[315] Similarly, they welcomed, and were very receptive to, mutual criticism—as evidenced in their exchange on guilt and responsibility.

When they reassumed their correspondence in autumn 1945, Jaspers was engaged in a series of lectures at the reopening of Heidelberg University. These lectures formed the basis of his classic *The Question of German Guilt* [*Die Schuldfrage: zur politischen Haftung Deutschlands*], which came out in April 1946, at the time of the Nuremberg trials.[316] Before turning to Arendt's and Jaspers' discussion of it, a general survey of Jaspers' book is in order.

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[313] Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains," 22.
[314] Steven E Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 108. For a perceptive reading of the correspondence from the perspective of Jewishness and Germanness (*Deutschtum*), see chapter six: "Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers: Friendship, Catastrophe and the Possibilities of German-Jewish Dialogue."
[315] Aschheim, 108.
[316] The direct translation of the German title and subtitle (which has been left out in the English version) is: *The Question of Guilt: on Germany's Political Liability*.

2.2.1: Jaspers' *Die Schuldfrage*

Jaspers' pioneering work was the first public attempt in Germany to wrestle with the questions of German guilt and responsibility. While it was by no means met with a favorable reception, it later achieved iconic status as a manifesto for a new political culture and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coping with the past).[317] In recent scholarship, its deficiencies have been scrutinized.[318] However, bearing in mind that it was written immediately in the wake of *Stunde Null*, its level of clarity and reflectiveness is remarkable—at least that was what caught Arendt's eye, her points of criticism notwithstanding. Her instant reaction is recorded in a letter to her husband, Henrich Blücher: "See how amazingly this fellow [Jaspers], in just nine months, has learned to come to an understanding of this new reality."[319]

Jaspers' basic take was to introduce a powerful and much debated typology of guilt, according to which four forms of guilt can be discerned: criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical guilt. His definition of criminal guilt is straightforward and traditional: it is simply legal guilt, that is, breach of the law. It deserves notice, though, that invoked international law as well as natural law, which he did in response to the fact that many Nazi perpetrators did not violate national law, thus constituting a new type of criminals: duty citizens acting on behalf of a criminal state, Jaspers.[320] The appeal to natural law, which became subject to a major renaissance in postwar Europe, was important, not least because international law did not provide a definition of crimes against humanity (a deficiency Arendt would later highlight; see below).[321] While Jaspers could not rely on such a definition in international law, he referred to what Kant in *Toward Perpetual Peace* had designated "a premise of international law:" that "nothing must happen in war which would make reconcilement flatly impossible." This Kantian injunction, Jaspers maintained, was "rejected

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[317] On the reception and the surprisingly late canonizing of Jaspers' work, see Jeffrey K. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943-1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[318] See especially the thorough and influential Anson Rabinbach, "The German as Pariah: Karl Jaspers's *The Question of German Guilt*," in Idem, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 129–65.
[319] Letter from Arendt to Blücher, July 1946. Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, *Within four walls: the correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, 1936-1968*, ed. Lotte Kohler (Orlando, Fla: Harcourt, 2000), 83. Also, Arendt instituted the translation and publication of the book in the USA (in fact, she initially intended to translate it herself); see Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 215–16.
[320] On the renaissance of natural law in the postwar period, see Jan Werner Müller… International law was of limited help, though, as there was not yet established a definition of crimes against humanity (a deficiency highlighted by Arendt; see below).
[321] On the postwar renaissance of natural law, see Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 128ff.

on principle by Hitler Germany."[322] On the problem of judging humans "retroactively under laws now made by the victors," Jaspers stated: "In the sense of humanity, of human rights and natural law, and in the sense of the Western ideas of liberty and democracy, laws already exist by which crimes may be determined."[323]

In affirming the legitimacy of the victors establishing a court, Jaspers also maintained that the demand the Allied made for reparation was just; and such political liability is the core of what he labeled political guilt. All citizens are liable, he insisted, even those who resisted the regime. Political guilt is thus shared and vicarious or "representative." As several scholars have noted, it is confusing that Jaspers referred to this as guilt rather than responsibility. Also, in some passages he inadvertently referred to it as political responsibility, for example when stating that "there can be no collective guilt of a people or a group within a people—except for political responsibility."[324] This confusion notwithstanding, it was a chief objective for Jaspers to separate the category of political guilt from the other forms of guilt.[325]

Whereas Jaspers in terms of legal and political guilt affirmed the right of the Allied to impose laws and liability, he contended that introspection could not be prescribed from outside. This is the domain of moral guilt, which he described as a strictly private and individual enterprise: it is the individual's guilty self-examination and self-confession. Hence, the "judge" is the individual's conscience [*Gewissen*]. On Jaspers account, one is not to judge other people morally: "The moral sentence on the other is suspended;" "[m]orally man can condemn only himself, not another." One should, as it were, stick to considering the beam in one's own eye. In judging oneself, however, one is free to seek clarity in communication with one's fellows. Moreover, as in criminal guilt, moral guilt results from one's own deeds and decisions. Jaspers underlined that having followed order did not absolve one of moral guilt.[326] If criminal guilt is met with punishment, and

[322] Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 48, 66.
[323] Jaspers, 49–50.
[324] Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 36; trans. moderated.
[325] For a critical account of this separation as part of an overall attempt to separate private and public dimensions of guilt; see Rabinbach, "The German as Pariah: Karl Jaspers's The Question of German Guilt," in Idem, In the Shadow of Catastrophe." See also Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 159. For an anti-criticism, see Andrew Schaap, "Guilty Subjects and Political Responsibility: Arendt, Jaspers and the Resonance of the 'German Question'in Politics of Reconciliation," *Political Studies* 49, no. 4 (2001): 754.
[326] If it is decidedly dangerous for one not to obey orders, this does, however, count as a mitigating circumstance; see Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 25–26.

political guilt merits reparation, "no one needs to acknowledge a worldly tribunal" in matters of moral guilt. Instead, its outgrowth is insight, which involves "penance and renewal."[327]

Finally, Jaspers made a case for metaphysical guilt—by far his most ambitious category—stating that there "exists a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world."[328] Conspicuously, this sounds exactly like Arendt's proclamation of universal responsibility and solidarity: that "men must assume responsibility for all crimes committed by men" and take "all human offenses upon themselves."[329] There are, however, noteworthy differences, too. For one, Jaspers' notion is explicitly theological: "In the end, […] the true collective is the solidarity of all men before God. Somewhere, everyone may free himself from the bonds of state or people or group and break through to the invisible solidarity of men—as men of goodwill and as men sharing the common guilt of being human."[330] Also, Jaspers claimed that "[j]urisdiction rests with God alone," and that metaphysical guilt "results in a transformation of human self-consciousness before God."[331] Beyond that, Jaspers stresses that metaphysical guilt is increased if crimes have been committed in one's presence or with one's knowledge. In differentiating it from moral guilt, Jaspers states that

> [m]etaphysical guilt is the lack of absolute solidarity with the human being as such—an indelible claim beyond morally meaningful duty. This solidarity is violated by my presence at a wrong or a crime. It is not enough that I cautiously risk my life to prevent it; if it happens, and if I was there, and if I survive where the other is killed, I know from a voice within myself: I am guilty of being still alive [*daß ich noch lebe, ist meine Schuld*].[332]

The unconditioned solidarity—the "capacity to live only together or not at all"—is "confined to the closest human ties;" and this causes metaphysical guilt: due to the survivors' failure to show unconditioned solidarity to all humans, they are all metaphysically guilty.[333] Expanding on this, Jaspers writes that "[w]e survivors […] did not go into the streets when our Jewish friends were led away; we did not scream until we too were destroyed. We preferred to stay alive, on the feeble, if

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[327] Jaspers, 57, 36, 33, 30.
[328] Jaspers, 26.
[329] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131-32. Indeed, Jaspers might have been directly influenced by Arendt, as she had sent him the essay. Even if the similarity is conspicuous, it is to my knowledge unnoticed in the literature. This might have to do with the aforementioned fact that Arendt's writings from the 1960s are most often treated alongside her writings from the 1940s.
[330] Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 69.
[331] Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, 26, 30; italics removed.
[332] Jaspers, 65.
[333] Jaspers, 26.

logical, ground that our death could not have helped anyone. We are guilty of being alive [or: That we live, is our guilt (*Daß wir leben, ist unsere Schuld*)]."[334]

Incidentally, Heidegger adopted the last sentence, which can also be translated as "That we live is our debt"); in this sense, it is actually encapsulating for Heidegger's fundamental-ontological understanding of *Schuld* as an existential indebtedness. Further, the context in which Heidegger quoted this sentence can be read as a point in case of the non-ethical character of his conception of *Schuld*: it is to be found in his notorious letter to one of his former Jewish students, Herbert Marcuse, who had confronted Heidegger with his silence about his Nazi-involvement.[335]

As for Jaspers, it should be evident that the task he had set himself in *Die Schuldfrage* was a monumental one; in Olick's summary, it was "a plea to his noncriminal compatriots to overcome their defenses and to realize where they too had incurred guilt. The four-part scheme was not merely a differentiation of guilt, but indeed a recognition of other kinds of guilt one may not have been willing to consider."[336]

2.2.2: Arendt's Response to Jaspers and Their Exchange of Ideas

Having set out the essentials of Jaspers' monograph, we now turn to Arendt's response. As indicated above, she was impressed how quickly Jaspers had come to an understanding of the situation. On the other hand, however, she believed that Jaspers' conceptualization was inadequate on some basic points. Her objections followed from her guiding interpretive principle: that Nazism and the Shoah constituted a radically new and unprecedented phenomenon. That is, it was not continuous with or causally linked to tradition, German or otherwise, but constituted a break with, indeed a breakdown of, tradition. Exculpating the German historical experience, Arendt insisted already in her 1945 essay "Approaches to the 'German Problem'" that "it was not any German tradition as such but the violation of all traditions which brought about Nazism."[337] In order to encompass the cultural rupture of the Shoah, a new conceptual framework was needed. It was not, insisted Arendt, comprehensible through familiar categories of thought. The core of the "horrible

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[334] Jaspers, 66.
[335] Herbert Marcuse and Martin Heidegger, "Herbert Marcuse and Martin Heidegger: An Exchange of Letters," trans. Richard Wolin, *New German Critique*, no. 53 (1991): 28–32. Letter from Heidegger to Marcuse of 20 January 1948
[336] Olick, *In the House of the Hangman*, 289.
[337] Hannah Arendt, "Approaches to the 'German Problem,'" *Jewish Frontier* 12, no. 1 (1945): 93–106. rpr. In Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 106–20: 110. This essay was published in the same issue of *Jewish Frontier* as "German Guilt." On the fact that Arendt in "exculpat[ing] the German historical experience" was in stark contrast to *Sonderweg* interpretations, but in line with prominent conservative historians such as Friedrich Meinecke and Gerhard Richter, see Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe*, 8–9, 111–12, 131.

novelty" was to be found in the Nazi ideology. Hence, in Arendt's analysis, it called for a political interpretation; a political interpretation based on a fundamental rethinking of our categories.

Arendt's critique of *Die Schuldfrage* takes its cue from this, her basic objection being that Jaspers attempts to illuminate the catastrophe by means of conventional, and not adequately politically conceived, categories. As a result, Jaspers is in Arendt's view not able to capture the unique, novel character of the Nazi crimes. In other words, Arendt's objection is that Jaspers cannot account for the uniqueness and magnitude of the catastrophe; by employing traditional concepts, he "makes ordinary" or represents as familiar what is actually extraordinary and unprecedented. This is particularly the case with Jaspers' notion of criminal guilt, Arendt holds:

> Your definition of Nazi policy as a crime ("criminal guilt") strikes me as questionable. The Nazi crimes, it seems to me, explode the limits of the law; and this is precisely what constitutes their monstrousness. For these crimes, no punishment is severe enough. It may well be essential to hang Göring, but it is totally inadequate. That is, this guilt, in contrast to criminal guilt, oversteps and shatters any and all legal systems. That is the reason why the Nazis in Nuremburg are so smug. […] We are simply not equipped to deal, on a human, political level, with a guilt that is beyond crime. […] I don't know how we will ever get out of it, for the Germans are burdened now with thousands or tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of people who cannot be adequately punished within the legal system.[338]

In his reply, Jaspers took issue with Arendt's depiction of an inhuman guilt, perceptively putting his finger on what appears to be a constant risk in descriptions of extreme evil: the risk of an "inverted romanticizing" of mythologizing atrocities and evildoers by depicting them in demonic terms:

> You said that what the Nazis did cannot be comprehended as "crime" – I am not altogether comfortable with your view, because a guilt that goes beyond all criminal guilt inevitably takes on a streak of "greatness" – of satanic greatness—which is, for me, as inappropriate for the Nazis as all the talk about the "demonic" element in Hitler and so forth. It seems to me that we have to see these things in their total banality, in their prosaic triviality, because that's what truly characterizes them. Bacteria can cause epidemics, but they remain merely bacteria. I regard any hint of myth and legend with horror, and everything unspecific is just such a hint. […] The way you do express it, you've almost taken the path of poetry. And a Shakespeare would never be able to give adequate form to this material—his instinctive aesthetic sense would lead to falsification of it—and that's why he couldn't attempt it. There is no idea and no essence here. Nazi crime is properly a subject for psychology and sociology, for psychopathology and jurisprudence only.[339]

[338] Arendt to Jaspers, August 17, 1946. Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers: Correspondence 1926-1969*, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1993), 54.
[339] Jaspers to Arendt, October 19, 1946. Arendt and Jaspers, 62.

By urging Arendt to see these things in their banality, Jaspers provided her with the keyword for her (in)famous portrayal of Adolf Eichmann and her 1960s reflections on evil.[340] In her answer to Jaspers, Arendt conceded that she was "dangerously close to that 'satanic greatness' that I, like you, totally reject," concurring with Jaspers that "[w]e have to combat all impulses to mythologize the horrible." While taking in this part of Jasper's criticism, she adhered to her claim about the extraordinary and radically transgressive quality of Nazi guilt. Its novelty, she specifies, and the reason why it transcends familiar categories, has to do with its non-utilitarian character: that the Nazis "without considering the economic usefulness of their actions at all (the deportations were very damaging to the war effort) built factories to produce corpses." This "inhuman guilt" is not driven by utilitarian, selfish, or other familiar human motives: "individual human beings did not kill other individual human beings for human reasons;" rather, "an organized attempt was made to eradicate the concept of the human being."[341]

As mentioned, it is crucial for Arendt that a political interpretation of guilt is needed. Commenting on Jaspers' notion of metaphysical guilt, Arendt contends that our conception of guilt needs to encompass "not only the 'absolute,' where indeed no earthly judge can be recognized anymore, but also that solidarity which is the political basis of the republic (and which Clemenceau expressed in the words 'L'affaire d'un seul est l'affaire de tous' [the concern of one is the concern of all])."[342] A more concrete part of Arendt's call for a political response and a political understanding of guilt is her suggestion to Jaspers that the recognition of guilt should be accompanied by a public gesture, by "some kind of declaration of goodwill," "a positive political statement of intentions addressed to the victims." Such a statement could for instance be, suggests Arendt, to renounce anti-Semitism constitutionally in a future German Republic, stipulating that any Jew "can become a citizen of this republic."[343]

[340] Aside her book on Eichmann, see Arendt's famous exchange with Scholem in which she uses exactly the same bacteria image; see Arendt, "Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt." The literature on Arendt's concepts of evil is extensive. For a thoughtful reflection on the relationship between Arendt's early notions of absolute and radical evil and her later suggestion of a banal and rootless evil, see Richard J Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge; Malden: Polity Press, 2008).
[341] Arendt to Jaspers, December 17, 1946. Arendt and Jaspers, *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers*, 69.
[342] Arendt to Jaspers, August 17, 1946. Arendt and Jaspers, 69.
[343] Arendt to Jaspers, August 17, 1946. Arendt and Jaspers, 53. Arendt reports that this is a point of view she has developed in discussion with her husband, Henrich Blücher.

Noteworthy, compared to "Organized Guilt," Arendt points to a different predicament of guilt and punishment. In the discussion with Jaspers, it is the enormity and monstrousness of the guilt that renders punishment principally impossible. That is, rather than being a problem of singling out the persons behind the misdeeds or of determining their individual share of the organized guilt, the predicament lies in the deed itself. Because of its monstrousness, its unprecedented scale of evil, there is no adequate punishment.[344] As emerges from the reference to Göring, in reflecting on the incommensurability between punishment and Nazi crimes, Arendt seemed not least to have had the main culprits—the easy identifiable top Nazis—in mind. Organized guilt, in turn, seems rather to be associated with the German society and population at large. Thus, if Arendt's considerations on the predicament of proportionality concern legal philosophy and the ethics of punishment, her concept of organized guilt is more sociologically oriented, addressing the "horrible novelty" of the administrative, societally organized character of the Holocaust.[345]

2.3: *Schuld* and Solipsism: Arendt's Criticism of Heidegger

Notably, Arendt's criticism targets all "pre-ethical" and generic notions that start out from guiltiness, with guilt assumed to be part of man's essence—whether the notion of guilt be theological or not. What drives Arendt's criticism is above all her concern as expressed in "Organized Guilt," and reiterated repeatedly throughout her authorship: "where all is guilty, nobody in the last analysis can be judged." By the same token, it is key for Arendt that guilt must be understood as a genuinely intersubjective phenomenon—that guilt does not have any pre-ethical, ontological status, independent of or prior to one's interpersonal relations. In what follows, I contend that a significant part of the polemical background against which Arendt develops her account of guilt is the ontological notion of guilt that Heidegger put forward in his enormously influential *magnus opus* of 1927, *Being and Time*.

As we have briefly mentioned, Heidegger wrote in a letter to Arendt that her concept of organized guilt "points to a hidden core […] of its *essence* in the history of Being."[346] In other words, Heidegger links Arendt's conception of guilt with his own speculative historical-philosophical idea of a "*Seinsgeschichte* enacted behind the backs of acting men," as Arendt

[344] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 7: "[…] keine Straffe gibt, die adäquat wäre."
[345] As we shall see, Arendt returns to this problem of proportionality in her chapter on forgiveness in *The Human Condition*, and she elaborates on her sociologically oriented analysis in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The latter has been expanded on in contemporary sociology, above all by Zygmunt Bauman in his *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cornell University Press, 1989).
[346] Letter from Heidegger dated February 15, 1950. Heidegger and Arendt, *Letters*, 64-65.

sarcastically terms it—a history unfolding an operating logic behind human history, hence depriving action of freedom and meaning.[347] Running counter to the whole thrust of Arendt's take on guilt, Heidegger's claim is deeply ironic. Not least is the fact that it overlooks Arendt's key convictions that guilt only comes into being by individually made actions and decisions, and that totalitarian guilt and evil were without precedent. Thus, rather than illuminating Arendt's position, it reveals more about Heidegger's own conception of guilt—to which Arendt is opposed.

As will become clear, the homology that Arendt sees between a Christian notion of sin and Heidegger's ontological interpretation of guilt is, simply put, that guilt becomes a matter of being rather than doing—that guilt is rendered an ontological condition and, further, that this is used to explain individual misdeeds. Thus, Heidegger's account is akin to theological anthropology, in that it presents guilt as being constitutively human: one is guilty by virtue of existing; guilt originates from being human. While this is a generic guilt common to all humans, it comes into being in the isolated individual, independent of one's interpersonal relations. In other words, intersubjectivity is cut off, or at least rendered secondary.

The contention that Arendt developed her position on guilt in opposition to Heidegger is, as we shall see, not merely based on the fact that her position constitutes an implicit criticism of Heidegger (insofar as their positions stand opposed). For one thing, while Arendt does not explicitly take issue with Heidegger in the inaugural entry, she does so in a later entry, labeling his idea of guilt "[d]ie ursprüngliche Schuld" (the original debt).[348] Moreover, Arendt's critical stance is confirmed by the marginalia in her personal copy of *Sein und Zeit*. Thus, in Heidegger's chapter on guilt, Arendt has made numerous disapproving comments and exclamation marks. Furthermore, beyond this private criticism, Arendt also made some critical comments in her published writings too, both before and after 1950. Whereas the intellectual relationship between Arendt and Heidegger has been extensively studied in two excellent monographs, little attention has been paid to the fact that Arendt criticizes Heidegger's account of guilt, and that Arendt, in her attempt to

[347] Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 192. For Arendt's scornful comments on this Heideggerian idea, see Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 179-87. In this context, Arendt cites a lecture Heidegger gave in 1949 (that is, shortly before their reunion), in which he states that "to act means to give a hand to the essence of Being." Ibid., 180; Arendt's translation. (The lecture was published in 1962.) Heidegger introduced his idea of *Seinsgeschichte* in the 1940s, after his famous *Kehre* (turn or reorientation). On the question of how *Seinsgeschichte* relates to Heidegger's notion of historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*), as well as to Hegel's philosophy of history, see Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 233-34; see also Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid*, 160-63.

[348] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 815; undated entry.

reinterpret guilt, engages polemically with Heidegger.[349] When it comes to Arendt's critical *Denktagebuch* entry on Heidegger's notion of guilt, the fact that she draws on this in *The Life of the Mind*, and the disapproving marginalia in her personal copy of *Sein und Zeit*, these issues have been wholly unexplored.

2.3.1: Arendt's Critique in Her Published Writings

We will start out in reverse chronological order, since Arendt presents her criticism of Heidegger's concept of guilt most clearly in *The Life of the Mind*.[350] More precisely, she does so in the context of a chapter-length critique of Heidegger in *Willing*, the second volume of *The Life of the Mind*, which she completed a week before her sudden death in 1975.[351] Before zooming in on Arendt's criticism of Heidegger's account of guilt, a brief remark on the nature of her critique of Heidegger will be useful.

As we have seen in chapter one, *Being and Time* owes its fame not least to Heidegger's project of challenging what he identified, in his characteristic meta-narrative manner, as a longstanding solipsistic conception of subjectivity that had been predominant since Descartes (the modern philosopher par excellence and the target of many twentieth century critics, Arendt included). In brief, Heidegger's verdict was that the subject of Cartesian epistemology and ontology confronts the external world—fellow humans included—as a disembodied and disengaged *res cogitans*, which is to say that the isolated subject's relations to others are a "reconstruction," derived from its capacity to represent the world within the boundaries of its own consciousness. This misapprehension was still in evidence, Heidegger indicated, in the works of his mentor, the founder of modern phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938): despite his use of the term *intersubjectivity*, Husserl remained stuck in the Cartesian paradigm, since he similarly

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[349] See Jacques Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997); and Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*. On Arendt's critique of Heidegger in *The Life of the Mind*, see also Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 52-103; and Arne Johan Vetlesen, "Hannah Arendt on Conscience and Evil," Philosophy & Social Criticism 27, no. 5 (2001): 1–33.

[350] This might seem to be out of tune with the chronological approach to Arendt's writings on forgiveness; yet, as far as this aspect of Arendt's account of guilt is concerned, Arendt sticks to her original position. In other words, there is argumentative consistency between her early and late accounts (and as mentioned, in her late account, she draws on her *Denktagebuch* notes).

[351] The *Life of the Mind* was meant to consist of three volumes, *Thinking*, *Willing*, and *Judging*. Volume one and two were published posthumously in 1978; see the editor's postface in Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, ed. Mary McCarthy (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1978). On Arendt's Heidegger critique in *The Life of the Mind*, see also Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 52-103; and Arne Johan Vetlesen, "Hannah Arendt on Conscience and Evil," Philosophy & Social Criticism 27, no. 5 (2001): 1–33.

conceptualized relations to others as a reconstruction resulting from the isolated subject's empathy [*Einfühlung*]. Against this backdrop, Heidegger set out to establish a social ontology, centered on a more engaged and practically involved notion of being-in-the-world [*in-der-Welt-sein*]. As Heidegger's peculiar terminology serves to underline, the self is always already—prior to any "theorizing"—worldly immersed: its being is *Dasein* [*being-there* or *being-here*].[352] By implication, the self is primordially social: it is always already in the world *with* others. What Heidegger did, then, was to "ontologize" intersubjectivity, to treat it ontologically in the framework of his so-called "fundamental ontology."

Arendt, however, takes issue with what she sees as Heidegger's essentially individualistic conceptualization of authentic *Dasein*. In other words, she puts her "critical finger" on those aspects that are not consistent with Heidegger's intersubjective endeavors. These included not least his conceptualization of guilt, insomuch as authentic Dasein requires recognizing one's being guilty. Thus, in claiming that Heidegger fails in one of his principal goals—or even, as we shall see, accentuates the subjectivism he sets out to overcome—Arendt's criticism is biting.

In *The Life of the Mind,* Arendt provides what Dana Villa calls a "meta-critique" of Heidegger, saying that "strictly speaking, there is no space for the political in Heidegger's thought."[353] As Villa notes, Arendt's "goal is not to reveal a profoundly *anti*political Heidegger," or to consider his "possible contribution to political theory;" rather, she proposes that the lack of space for the political is "the effect of the deeply *un*political nature of his thought," tracing a "disjunction between thinking and acting, ontology and politics, to the core of his thought."[354] To put it another way, Arendt's verdict is that Heidegger, in his famous attempt to address what he saw as an oblivion of being, committed to an oblivion of action and human relationality. The unpolitical nature of his thought follows, according to Arendt, from Heidegger's merging action with thought—condemning the former, commending the latter, and regarding thinking as the only genuine form of action.

It should be noted that Arendt's reading, as Villa points out, "goes out of its way to deny the relevance of Heidegger's thought to political theory."[355] In so doing, Arendt downplays or bypasses the worldly aspects of Heidegger's early philosophy (that is, above all, division one in *Being and Time*). More concretely, she does so, as we shall see, by interpreting Heidegger's notion

[352] The adverb *da* denotes both a spatial location and a temporal location; cf. "DWDS – Da." The *sein* in Dasein is a verb infinitive, not a substantive (*Sein*), that is, it means "to be."
[353] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 230.
[354] Villa, 230 & 234.
[355] Villa, 231.

of the authentic self solely in terms of the call of conscience. However, since we focus on guilt—which Heidegger certainly links exclusively to the call of conscience—we can leave this out of consideration. Also, rather than examining the justification of Arendt's criticism, the main question for us is how Arendt interprets Heidegger, and what this says about her understanding of guilt.

With these brief, general remarks in mind, we can now turn to Arendt's criticism of Heidegger's conceptualization of guilt. Addressing Heidegger's contributions to the question of personal identity, Arendt observes that

> In *Being and Time*, the term 'self' is the 'answer to the question Who [is man]?' as distinguished from the question What he is; the Self is the term for man's existence as distinguished from whatever qualities he may possess. This existence, the 'authentic being a Self,' is derived polemically from the 'Them' [*das Man*]. […] By modifying the 'They' of everyday life into 'being oneself,' human existence produces a '*solus ipse*,' and Heidegger speaks in this context of an 'existential solipsism,' that is, of the actualization of the *principium individuationis*.[356]

The latter, *principium individuationis* (the principle of individuation), refers to the source of personal identity, that is, in Heidegger's terms, of authentically being a self. The Heideggerian self becomes manifest, Arendt proceeds, "in 'the voice of conscience,' which calls man back from his everyday entanglement in the *'man'* (German for 'one' or 'they') and what conscience, in its call, discloses as human 'guilt,' a word (*Schuld*) that in German means both being guilty of (responsible for) some deed and having debts in the sense of owing somebody something."[357] Accordingly, Arendt identifies the "main point in Heidegger's 'idea of guilt'" to be "that human existence is guilty to the extent that it 'factually exists'; it does not 'need to become guilty of something through omissions or commissions; [it is only called upon] to actualize authentically the 'guiltiness' which it is anyhow.'"[358] This is, Arendt remarks, a "definition of being-guilty as a primary trait of *Dasein*, independent of any specific act." [359]

As to the twofold meaning of *Schuld*, we can thus state that Heidegger's idea of *Schuld* constitutes a semantic exclusion, in the sense that it bypasses or cuts off the first meaning of *Schuld* ("being guilty of (responsible for) some deed"). Further, with regard to the second meaning – "having debts in the sense of owing somebody something" – Heidegger's idea is of an enormous generality: what is owed is one's very existence; the debt is one's being. And clearly, one's debt is

[356] Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 184.
[357] Arendt, 184.
[358] Arendt, 184.
[359] Arendt, 194.

not interpersonal – it is not a debt to a concrete other person – nor is it a relation to God. Insofar as Heidegger understands guilt as a state of being – as referring to one's being, rather than one's doings – guilt, as it were, lacks an object. Hence, it cannot be redeemed, and it is not something of one's own making, or something that one can be held accountable for. As Arendt sarcastically remarks (demonstrably putting "guilty" in inverted commas), Heidegger's "'guilty' self can [only] salvage itself by anticipating its death."[360]

Arendt stresses that Heidegger's ontological notion of guilt as "existential culpability – given by human existence" is connected to his idea that one has been thrown (*geworfen*) into the world: "the concept of 'being thrown into the world' already implies that human existence *owes* its existence to something that it is not itself; by virtue of its very existence it is indebted: *Dasein* – human existence inasmuch as it is – 'has been thrown; it is there, but *not* brought into the there [da] by itself'."[361] Thus, in Arendt's reading, Heidegger's account of guilt is essentially that a call of conscience summons the individual human being "back to his authentic self, to the insight that, no matter what he has done or omitted to do, he was already *schuldig* ('guilty') since his existence was a debt he 'owed' after having been thrown into the world."[362]

In a penetrating analysis of Arendt's critique of Heidegger in *The Life of the Mind,* Arne Johan Vetlesen identifies Arendt's key, principal objection to Heidegger's notion of guilt to be that it is "unsuited to function as a *principium individuationis,* especially in a morally and politically relevant manner." This is because guiltiness is situated "at so basic a level of man's existence as to originate in the sheer fact of human existence as such."[363] Arendt's objection is, Vetlesen observes, "that it is fundamentally wrong-headed – not to mention politically and legally dangerous – to speak of guilt in a generic (collectivized) sense, as opposed to a sense that from the very beginning views guilt as a matter of a distinct individual's doing something he ought not have done (or not doing something he ought to have done)."[364] Thus, "the basic fault […] consists in locating the category of guilt on a level *preceding* individually made decisions and actions."[365] The only possible place for individuality in Heidegger's conceptualization is in how the individual *relates* to the "generic guilt," in how (s)he chooses to respond to the call of conscience. Yet, for

[360] Arendt, 193.
[361] Arendt, 184.
[362] Arendt, 193.
[363] Arne Johan Vetlesen, Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2005), 74–75; emphasis removed.
[364] Vetlesen, "Hannah Arendt on Conscience and Evil," 27.
[365] Vetlesen, *Evil and Human Agency*, 75.

Arendt, guilt must single out and individualize in such a way that it is not reduced to being a matter of how the individual relates or responds to guilt; the content of guilt—what guilt is about and refers back to—must also, as Vetlesen remarks, "be something truly of the single individual's own making."[366]

In addition to this principal objection, an interrelated and equally central element of Arendt's criticism is that Heidegger does not conceive of guilt as an intersubjective phenomenon. As we have seen, "Heideggerian guilt" comes into being in the isolated individual, independent of his or her interhuman relations; guilt through action is derived and secondary. Also, the Heideggerian guilty self is wholly isolated, Arendt notes: "What the call of conscience actually achieves is the recovery of the individualized (*vereinzeltes*) self from involvement in the events that determine men's everyday activities as well as the course of recorded history."[367] What is called for, accordingly, is not inter-subjective activity; to the contrary, it is a withdrawal from sociality. It is an entirely inner activity, which for Arendt signifies a merging of acting with thinking. Accordingly, Arendt uses inverted comas not only when referring to what Heidegger calls guilt, but also when she refers to what he terms action:

> Conscience demands that man accept that 'indebtedness' [of owing one's existence], and acceptance means that the Self brings itself to a kind of 'acting' (*handeln*) which is polemically understood as the opposite of the 'loud' and visible actions of public life – the mere froth on what truly is. This acting is silent a 'letting one's own self act in its indebtedness,' and this entirely inner 'action' in which man opens himself to the authentic actuality of being thrown, can exist only in the activity of thinking. That is probably why Heidegger, throughout his whole work, 'on purpose avoided' dealing with action.[368]

What is more, Heidegger construes thinking as a markedly isolated activity, Arendt maintains:

> What is most surprising in his interpretation of conscience is the vehement denunciation of 'the ordinary interpretation of conscience' that has always understood it as a kind of soliloquy, the 'soundless dialogue of me and myself.' Such a dialogue […] can only be understood as an inauthentic attempt at self-justification against the claims of the 'Them.' This is all the more striking because Heidegger, in a different context […], speaks of 'the voice of the friend that every *Dasein* carries with it.'[369]

[366] Vetlesen, *Evil and Human Agency*, 76.
[367] Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 185.
[368] Arendt, 184–85.
[369] Arendt, 185.

In Arendt's reading, Heidegger's account could thus hardly be less intersubjective. Not only does Heidegger merge acting with thinking; it is an entirely "solitary thinking [which] constitutes the only relevant action in the factual record of history."[370]

On this point, it is relevant to take into consideration Arendt's 1946 essay "What is *Existenz* Philosophy?"[371] Whereas Arendt in *The Life of the Mind* does not reflect on Heidegger's possible contribution to political theory, maintaining, as we saw (with reference to Villa), that the unworldly nature of Heidegger's thought forecloses any such contribution, she does examine this question in the essay—albeit that her verdict turns out to be altogether negative. As a fundamental denunciation of *Being and Time*, the essay constitutes Arendt's harshest attack on Heidegger. If Arendt is critical and ironic in *The Life of the Mind,* she is in this essay sarcastic and decidedly hostile. Yet while the tone is much harsher, not to say bitter, and the points of criticism less spelled out, Arendt's main accusation is essentially the same: that Heidegger reverts to the subjectivism and solipsism he set out to overcome. Despite Heidegger's aspirations to intersubjectivity, and despite his philosophy being "the first absolutely and uncompromisingly this-worldly philosophy," Heidegger ends up divesting his fellow humans and the world of any significance—except for providing the backdrop against which the isolated individual can strive for authenticity. The common world of interhuman relations is rendered the inauthentic sphere of *das Man,* from which one must withdraw in order to authentically become a self. Accordingly, the "essential character of the [Heideggerian] Self," Arendt indicates, "is its absolute Self-ness, its radical separation from all its fellows." But, Arendt objects, "a self, taken in its absolute isolation, is meaningless; and if it is not isolated but involved in the everyday life of the They, it is no longer Self."[372] Hence, while human beings in Heidegger's analysis "are an element of existence that is structurally necessary," they are "at the same time an impediment to the Being of Self."[373]

As in *The Life of the Mind*¸ Arendt maintains that Heidegger conceptualizes guilt along these subjectivist lines, pursuing "the phantom of Self."[374] Directing attention to Heidegger's notion of fallenness (*Verfallenheit*) as "a structurally inevitable phenomenon," Arendt remarks that "*Dasein* could only be truly itself if it could be pulled back from its being-in-the-world to itself, but that is what its nature can never permit, and that is why […] it is always a falling away from itself.

[370] Arendt, 181.
[371] Arendt, "What Is Existential Philosophy?"
[372] Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 180–81.
[373] Arendt, 186.
[374] Arendt, 186.

[…] 'It has fallen into the world.'" Yet, Arendt proceeds, "[m]an's being is such that in constantly falling into the world it at the same time constantly hears the 'call of conscience from the ground of its being.' To live existentially therefore means: 'Willing-to-have-conscience commits itself to this being-guilty.'" In this resolve, following from man's realizing that "'*Dasein* as such is guilty,' […] the Self constitutes itself."[375]

It should be evident that Arendt does not regard the concept of guilt in *Being and Time* as an intersubjective concept. Having no "shared, common ground to stand on," Heidegger's guilty Selves are wholly isolated.[376] Notably, although somewhat in passing, Arendt reflects on what this means for the understanding of reconciliation:

> If it does not belong to the concept of man that he inhabits the world with others of his kind, then all that remains for him is a mechanical reconciliation by which the atomized Selves are provided with a common ground that is essentially alien to their nature. All that can result from that is the organization of these Selves intent only on themselves into an Over-self in order somehow to effect a transition from resolutely accepted guilt to action.[377]

The Heideggerian notion of guilt devoid of reference to human interaction thus correlates with an equally individualistic and abstract notion of reconciliation: a reflexive and strictly individual reconciliation occurring in atomized, isolated subjects. Further, unlike Arendt's notion of reconciliation in the opening text of the *Denktagebuch*, this "mechanic reconciliation" is not connected to a gratitude for the givenness of being. In fact, unlike her interpretation in *The Life of the Mind,* Arendt insists that Heidegger does not even conceive being as given. That is, whereas Arendt in *The Life of the Mind* criticized Heidegger for connecting the givenness of being with guilt, thereby contaminating "the innocence of becoming" (Nietzsche), her charge in the 1946 essay is that Heidegger does not in any way acknowledge the givenness of being. Emphasizing nihilistic tendencies and largely portraying Heidegger as a philosophical necrophiliac, Arendt's line of reasoning is that Heidegger's thesis that being is time—or, in Arendt's words, that "temporality is the meaning of being"—implies that "the meaning of being is nothingness," that "Being in a Heideggerian sense is Nothing." This is not least due to Heidegger's strong emphasis on death in his analysis of *Dasein* as conditioned by death, by one's Being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*).

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[375] Arendt, "What Is Existential Philosophy?," 179–81 & 186. Arendt's citations are from *Being and Time*. She does not reference the page numbers.
[376] Arendt, 181.
[377] Arendt, 181–82.

Now, "designating Being as nothingness," Arendt claims, "brings with it the attempt to put behind us the definition of Being as what is given."[378]

Moreover, if being really is nothingness, man's being guilty is tantamount to a "guilty nothingness:" "In experiencing death as nothingness as such, I have the opportunity to devote myself exclusively to being-a-Self and, in the mode of axiomatic guilt, to free myself once and for all from the world that entangles me." The anticipation of death and the idea of "guilty nothingness" thus facilitate Heidegger's rendition of man as radically isolated; for death removes man "from connection with those who are his fellows, and who as "They" constantly prevent his being-a-Self."[379]

Thus, in Arendt's reading, Heidegger by no means succeeds in overcoming subjectivism; to the contrary, his "preoccupation with Self-ness" increases the subjectification of the world and the human beings inhabiting it.[380] Likewise, Heidegger's project of devising an uncompromisingly secular analysis of human existence does not attain its goal. Arendt proposes a causal relationship between these two deficiencies: the lack of intersubjectivity in Heidegger's account is not least due to his rendition of a solitary Self being godlike:

> This ideal of the Self follows as a consequence of Heidegger's making of man what God was in earlier ontology. A being of the highest order is conceivable only as single and unique and knowing no equals. What Heidegger designates as the "fall" includes all those modes of existence in which man is not god but lives together with his own kind in the world.[381]

So rather than conducting a phenomenological analysis of interhuman relations, Heidegger instead performs a subject-centered transformation of a traditional ontological framework. Expanding on this indictment, which she reiterates throughout her essay, Arendt states that "Heidegger claims to have found a being in whom essence and existence are identical, and that being is man. His essence is his existence." In effect, Heidegger "puts man in the exact same place that God had occupied in traditional ontology," in the sense that "God was the being in whom essence and existence were one, in whom thinking and action were identical, and who therefore was declared the otherworldly fundament of this-worldly being."[382] Arendt sees this as a (Nietzschean) hubristic attempt "to make man the master of being;" an "arrogant illusion that [humans] constitute Being itself." As follows,

[378] Arendt, 176–77.
[379] Arendt, 181.
[380] Arendt, 187.
[381] Arendt, 180.
[382] Arendt, 177–78.

combined with the idea that being is really nothingness, the Heideggerian man can "imagine that he stands in the same relationship to Being as the Creator stood before creating the world […] *ex nihilo*."[383]

2.3.2: Arendt's Critique in the *Denktagebuch*

We shall now return to Arendt's *Denktagebuch*. My basic proposals are, to repeat: first, that Arendt in her criticism in *The Life of the Mind* of Heidegger's conception of guilt draws on her *Denktagebuch*; second, that her criticism of the Christian notion of sin also targets Heidegger's ontological concept of guilt, or in other words, that the polemical background against which she develops her interpretation of guilt includes Heidegger's concept of guilt; third, that Arendt's juxtaposition of existential gratefulness and existential ressentiment in the first entry can be seen as at once a criticism and an appropriation of Heidegger's reflections on guilt and his attendant binary of authentic and inauthentic modes of existing – the decisive difference being that for Arendt, the proper existential attitude toward givenness, toward the fact that one has been given being, is not guilt, but gratitude: a *Dankbarkeit für das Gegebene*.[384]

On Heidegger's notion of conscience in *Being and Time,* Arendt notes:

> Gewissen:
> a) der Ruf an das Selbst auf dem Man, zum Selbstsein
> b) entfacht kein inneres Selbstgespräch, das dargestellt ist als ein Gespräch zwischen Man-selbst und Selbst
> c) zum Ruf gehört das Hören
> d) Der Rufer gibt sich nicht zu erkennen, also muss die Frage: Wer ruft (eigentlich die Frage: was ist das Gewissen) phänomenal unbeantwortet bleiben. 'Der Ruf kommt aus mir und doch über mir' – 'es' ruft.
> Der Rufer ist das nackte 'Dass' der Existenz in ihrer Unheimlichkeit, nicht Zuhause-sein. 'Das Dasein ist Rufer und Angerufener zumal:' Ruf der Sorge.[385]

We find here the building blocks for Arendt's criticism of Heidegger in *The Life of the Mind*. She criticizes Heidegger for construing conscience as an altogether solitary and subject-isolated phenomenon, for denouncing conscience as an intra-personal dialogue, and for being speculative and "un-phenomenological." What conscience actually is remains "phänomenal unbeantwortet" – or, as she reiterates in *The Life of the Mind,* "unaccounted for by phenomenological evidence."[386]

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[383] Arendt, 178 & 186.
[384] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4.
[385] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 814-15; undated entry. I have retained Arendt's underlining, due to the notebook character of this entry. In turn, I have left out the references that Arendt has made in the entry to the paragraph and page numbers of the quotations from *Sein und Zeit*.
[386] See Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, where Arendt refers to "the 'naked that.'"

Criticizing further the non-dialogic and entirely solitary and subjectivist character of Heidegger's account, Arendt writes: "'Dem Ruf als ursprünglicher Rede des Daseins entspricht nicht eine Gegenrede – etwa gar im Sinne eines verhandelnden Beredens dessen, was das Gewissen sagt.' Verschwiegenheit – 'Das Gewissen ruft nur schweigend' und wird im Modus der Verschwiegenheit verstanden."[387] Also, we can detect Arendt's charge of unworldliness against Heidegger: in addition to being solitary and isolated, the Heideggerian human being is not at home in the world; the world which (s)he has been thrown into is *unheimlich*. In other words, if *Dasein* means being-in-the-world, it is, as it were, an *unheimlich in-der-Welt-sein.*

With regard to *Schuld*, Arendt's notes testify to her verdict that Heidegger's ontologization of guilt disconnects it from interhuman relations and action; that guilt, in his analysis, stems from one's being rather than from one's doings:

> Schuld: Die ursprüngliche Schuld: Da ich mich nicht selbst gemacht habe, schulde ich mein Dasein, ich bin ein Schuldner. Der Ruf ruft aus dem Man zurück zur Anerkenntnis des Schuldigseins. Schuld durch Tat: 'abgeleitet'!! –
> Jedes Handeln ist faktisch notwendig 'gewissenlos.' […]
> 'Wir vermieden den Terminus 'Handeln' absichtlich. Denn… [er legt das Missverständnis] nahe, als sei die Entschlossenheit ein besonderes Verhalten des ein besonderes Verhalten des praktischen Vermögens gegenüber einem theoretischen.'
> Cf. 'Die Öffentlichkeit verdunkelt alles.'

As in *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt scornfully indicts Heidegger for holding guilty deeds to be derived (*abgeleitet*) from one's guilty being and for avoiding the term *action*. Similarly, we find her characterization of Heidegger's account as a primordial, existential indebtedness, as *Schuld* in the sense of owing somebody something. Moreover, it is noteworthy that she labels Heidegger's concept of guilt "[d]ie ursprüngliche Schuld" (the original debt). This can be read as an indication that Arendt regarded Heidegger's ontologization of guilt as bearing affinity with the Christian theological notion of original sin, which she, as we have seen, vehemently attacks in the inaugural entry. In what follows, I seek to demonstrate that Arendt's attack on the Christian notion of sin can simultaneously be read as an attack on Heidegger's ontologization of guilt.

Primarily, the parallel between Heidegger's concept of guilt and (Arendt's construal of) the Christian concept of sin is that they are not based on human interaction, but are rather situated on a generic and pre-ethical level, so that humans are regarded as being guilty or sinful "beforehand," regardless of their action. Accordingly, insofar as guilt and sin are deemed not to stem from one's relationship with other humans, both concepts are individualistic. For the same

[387] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 815.

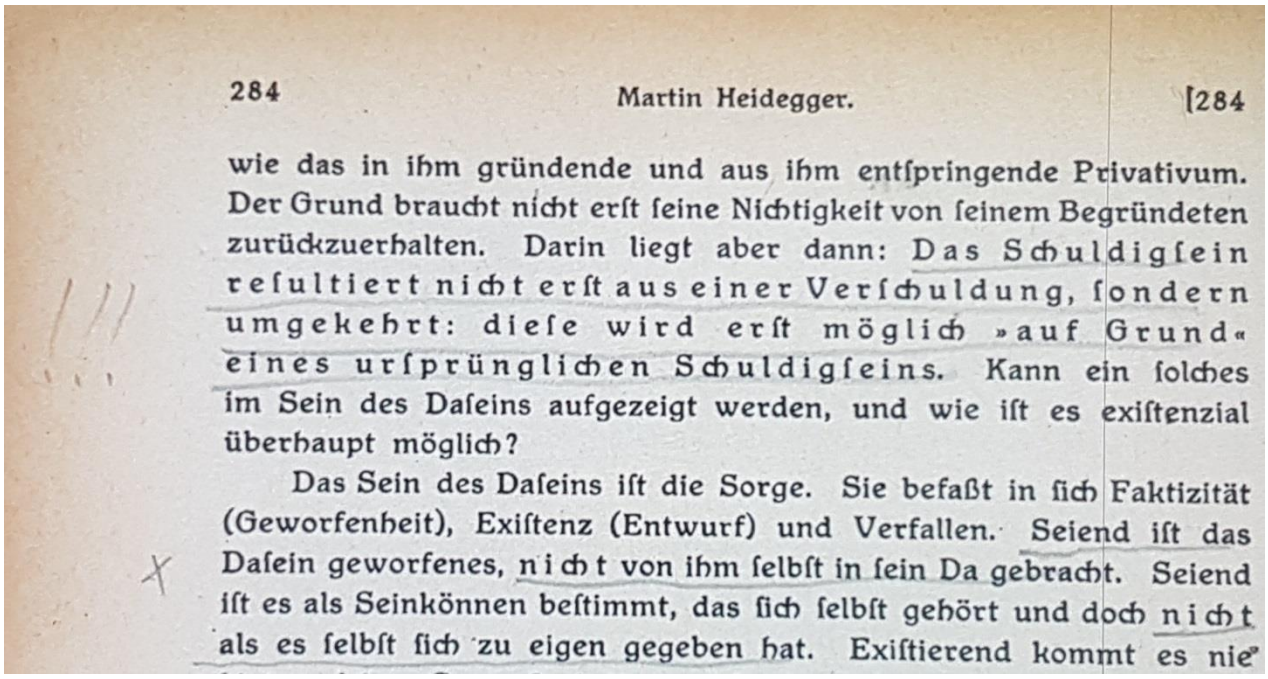
reason, they are both undifferentiated: Humans are equally guilty; guilt is something given in the same way to each and everyone. Furthermore, such pre-ethical guiltiness is used to explain ethical guilt: One becomes guilty because one is guilty; or, to repeat one of Arendt's critical remarks on the Christian notion of sin: "Jedes Unrecht-getan-haben wird zum Beweis und damit zur Aktualisierung des Schuldig-seins. […] [Der Mensch] sei sündig schon gewesen, bevor er irgendetwas Unrechtes tat."[388] Bearing Arendt's charges against Heidegger in mind, it is obvious that this targets Heidegger as well. Recall, for instance, Arendt's objections that Heidegger's definition of being guilty is "independent of any specific act," and that his claim is that "no matter what [a man] has done or omitted to do, he was already *schuldig*," and her quoting of Heidegger's statement that human existence "does not 'need to become guilty of something through omissions or commissions; [it is only called upon] to actualize authentically the 'guiltiness' which it is anyhow.'"[389]

Notably, theological reflections on sin are correlative in the sense that they can only be comprehended in relation to reflections on notions such as mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation, justification, and salvation. While forgiveness and reconciliation are clearly present in Arendt's thought, their role in Heidegger's thought are open to question. In Arendt's reading, all that remains in *Being and Time* is, as we saw, what she labeled a "mechanical reconciliation," a coming to terms with the "Naked That." Also, Arendt claims that the Heideggerian reconciliation represents an entirely inner and "non-intersubjective" form of action, tantamount to merging action with thinking. But this is not necessarily unlike those theological conceptions in which intersubjectivity and action play little or no part. Obviously, Luther, in insisting on justification by faith alone, is a prime example of this, and both Paul and Augustine are also (at least in a traditional Protestant line of interpretation) regarded as representatives of the view that mercy and salvation are independent of good works and merits.

[388] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 69. "Every having-done-wrong becomes evidence of and as such the actualization of being-guilty. [...] [Man is] already sinful before they did anything wrong."
[389] Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 184, 193, 194.

2.3.3: Arendt's marginalia in her copy of *Sein und Zeit*

In view of Arendt's highly critical stance on Heidegger's interpretation of guilt, it is not surprising to find that the chapter on guilt in her copy of *Sein und Zeit* is full of exclamation marks and critical comments in the margins.[390] To give an example:



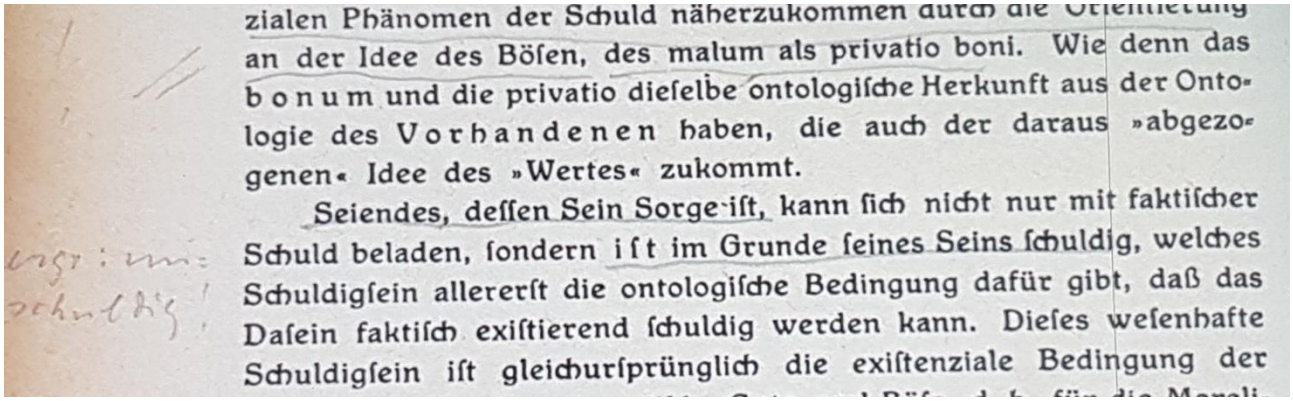
284 Martin Heidegger. [284

wie das in ihm gründende und aus ihm entſpringende Privativum. Der Grund braucht nicht erſt ſeine Nichtigkeit von ſeinem Begründeten zurückzuerhalten. Darin liegt aber dann: Das Schuldigſein reſultiert nicht erſt aus einer Verſchuldung, ſondern umgekehrt: dieſe wird erſt möglich »auf Grund« eines urſprünglichen Schuldigſeins. Kann ein ſolches im Sein des Daſeins aufgezeigt werden, und wie iſt es exiſtenzial überhaupt möglich?

Das Sein des Daſeins iſt die Sorge. Sie befaßt in ſich Faktizität (Geworfenheit), Exiſtenz (Entwurf) und Verfallen. Seiend iſt das Daſein geworfenes, nicht von ihm ſelbſt in ſein Da gebracht. Seiend iſt es als Seinkönnen beſtimmt, das ſich ſelbſt gehört und doch nicht als es ſelbſt ſich zu eigen gegeben hat. Exiſtierend kommt es nie

Many of Arendt's comments in the margins reappear in her Heidegger-critiques in *Denktagebuch* and her published works. For example, we find Arendt's objection that by rendering all humans equally guilty, Heidegger is actually proclaiming universal innocence. Thus, against Heidegger's claims that Dasein is universally guilty by virtue of existing, Arendt has made marginal notes such as: "Also: unschuldig" and "Ergo: unschuldig!"[391]

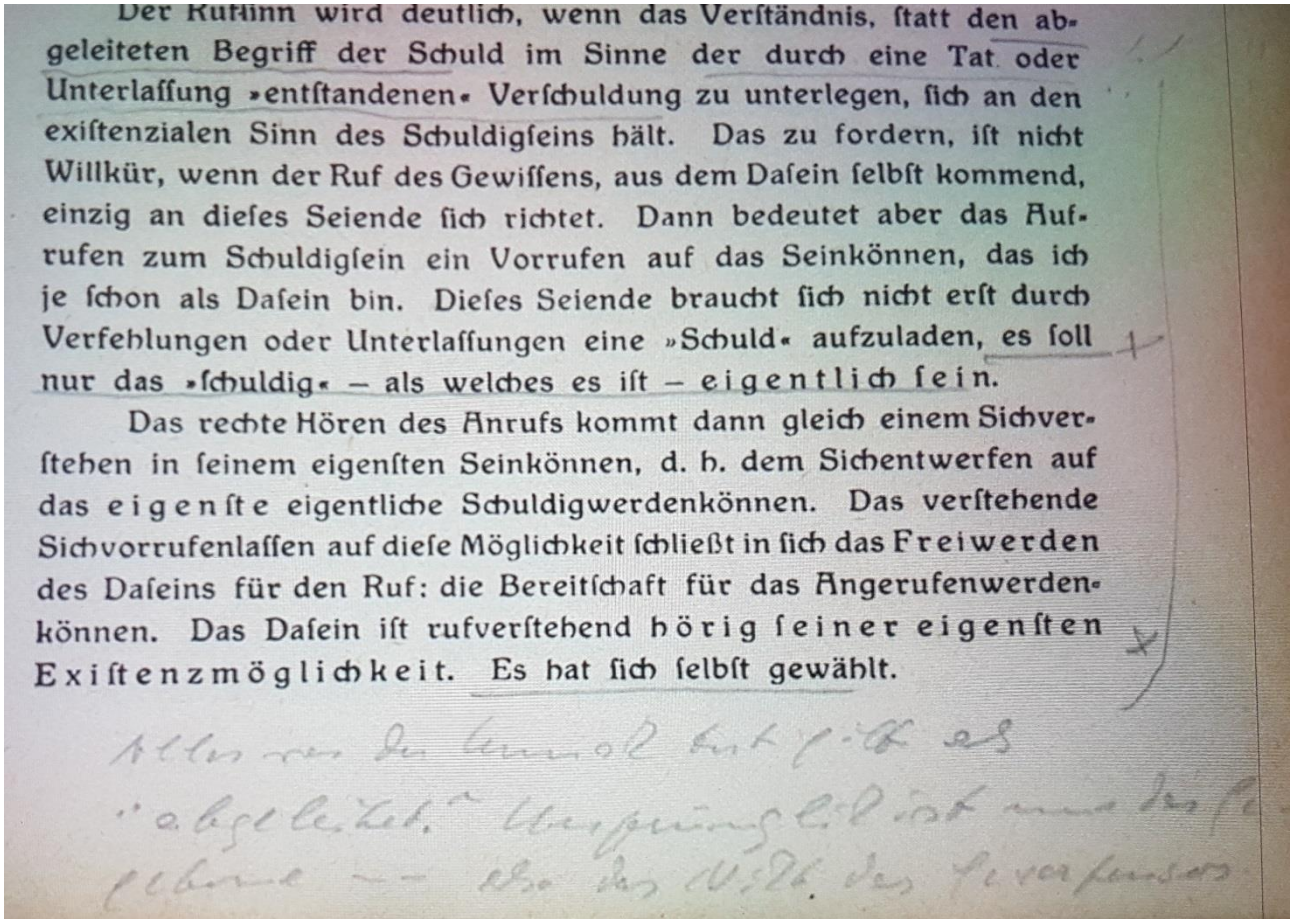
[390] Arendt's personal library is deposited at the Arendt Collection, Stevenson Library, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Her copy of *Sein und Zeit* is the 1949 version referenced above. Her earlier copy is not preserved.
[391] Ibid. "Ergo: innocent."



zialen Phänomen der Schuld näherzukommen durch die Orientierung an der Idee des Bösen, des malum als privatio boni. Wie denn das bonum und die privatio dieselbe ontologische Herkunft aus der Ontologie des Vorhandenen haben, die auch der daraus »abgezogenen« Idee des »Wertes« zukommt.

Seiendes, dessen Sein Sorge ist, kann sich nicht nur mit faktischer Schuld beladen, sondern ist im Grunde seines Seins schuldig, welches Schuldigsein allererst die ontologische Bedingung dafür gibt, daß das Dasein faktisch existierend schuldig werden kann. Dieses wesenhafte Schuldigsein ist gleichursprünglich die existenziale Bedingung der

Also, she has made a note on Heidegger's description of guilt through action as derived, which points to her comments on this in *Denktagebuch* and *The Life of the Mind*. In this context, moreover, there is a comment pointing to her critique of Heidegger's nexus of guilt and givenness and what she, as described, sees as "guilty nothingness": "Ursprünglich ist man das Gegebene – also das Nichts des Geworfenseins."[392]



Der Rufsinn wird deutlich, wenn das Verständnis, statt den abgeleiteten Begriff der Schuld im Sinne der durch eine Tat oder Unterlassung »entstandenen« Verschuldung zu unterlegen, sich an den existenzialen Sinn des Schuldigseins hält. Das zu fordern, ist nicht Willkür, wenn der Ruf des Gewissens, aus dem Dasein selbst kommend, einzig an dieses Seiende sich richtet. Dann bedeutet aber das Aufrufen zum Schuldigsein ein Vorrufen auf das Seinkönnen, das ich je schon als Dasein bin. Dieses Seiende braucht sich nicht erst durch Verfehlungen oder Unterlassungen eine »Schuld« aufzuladen, es soll nur das »schuldig« – als welches es ist – eigentlich sein.

Das rechte Hören des Anrufs kommt dann gleich einem Sichverstehen in seinem eigensten Seinkönnen, d. h. dem Sichentwerfen auf das eigenste eigentliche Schuldigwerdenkönnen. Das verstehende Sichvorrufenlassen auf diese Möglichkeit schließt in sich das Freiwerden des Daseins für den Ruf: die Bereitschaft für das Angerufenwerdenkönnen. Das Dasein ist rufverstehend hörig seiner eigensten Existenzmöglichkeit. Es hat sich selbst gewählt.

[392] Ibid.

3: From Opposing to Promoting Forgiveness: Forgiveness in *Denktagebuch* 1950-53

3.1. The Outset: Arendt as a Proponent of Anti-Forgiveness

In the *Denktagebuch,* Arendt employs the image of a burden on one's shoulders to describe wrongdoing. As she states in the first sentence: "Das Unrechte, das man getan hat, ist die Last auf den Schultern, etwas was man trägt, weil man es sich aufgeladen hat."[393] This is not, Arendt stresses, to be confused with "Schuld als ein psychologischer Fakt," or what we could call feelings of guilt; it is nothing but "das wirklich geschehene Unrecht."[394] Such a burden on one's shoulders "kann einem nur Gott abnehmen."[395] As a result, interhuman forgiveness is misguided; it is a hubris-ridden act, in which the forgiver believes or pretends to be able to remove from the wrongdoer what, in fact, only God is capable of removing.[396] In forgiving, in other words, one acts as if one were in a superior position, imitating God's grace. This is illusory and a sham, or what Arendt terms a *Scheinvorgang*:

> Verzeihung, oder was gewöhnlich so genannt wird, ist in Wahrheit nur ein Scheinvorgang, in dem der Eine sich überlegen gebärdet, wie der Andere etwas verlangt, was Menschen einander weder geben noch abnehmen können. Der Scheinvorgang besteht darin, dass dem Einen scheinbar die Last von den Schultern genommen wird von einem Andern, der sich als unbelastet darstellt.[397]

Arendt thus contends that forgiveness is based on asymmetric relationships. Presupposing that the forgiver is in a position of "absolute superiority," forgiveness can only occur between those who are "in principle qualitatively separate."[398] As a result of this asymmetry, playing such a role has a destructive impact on inter-human relationships: it only increases inequality. Hence, forgiveness does not lead to reconciliation; it does not re-establish a broken relationship nor restore equality between parties. Quite the contrary: "Die Geste der Verzeihung zerstört die Gleichheit und damit

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[393] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "The wrong that one has done is the burden on one's shoulders, something that one bears because one has taken it upon oneself." In *Denktagebuch,* Arendt makes excessive use of underscoring. Assuming that this is due to its handwritten character, I have omitted the underscoring here.
[394] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7: "guilt as a psychological fact;" "the wrong that really occurred."
[395] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "only God can remove."
[396] In this text, Arendt's preferred term for forgiveness is *Verzeihung*. Later on, as we shall see, her preferred term becomes *Verzeihen.* On the etymology of *Verzeihung*, *Verzeihen*, and *Vergebung*, see below.
[397] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "Forgiveness, or what is commonly referred to as such, is in reality only a sham act, in which the one person acts superior, as if the other person requires something which humans can neither give nor take from one another. The sham act consists in the fact that one person apparently takes on their shoulders the burden of another, who is depicted as unburdened."
[398] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "absoluten Überlegenheit;" "Verzeihung gibt es nur unter prinzipiell qualitativ voneinander Geschiedenen."

das Fundament menschlicher Beziehungen so radikal, dass eigentlich nach einem solchen Akt gar keine Beziehung möglich sein sollte."[399]

It is not entirely clear whether forgiveness increases an already existing inequality, or if it rather destroys an existing equality. In other words, it is unclear whether forgiveness presupposes inequality (which, in the performance of forgiveness, is increased), or if forgiveness, as Arendt seems to suggest in the quotation above, can rather take place between parties who, before the destructive act of forgiveness, were equals. In any event, Arendt strikingly describes forgiveness itself as an offense. It is as if the act of forgiveness reverses the status and the roles of the perpetrator and the victim, the offender and the offended: by receiving the victim's forgiveness, the offender is offended. This leads to a situation that is beyond repair: the offense – the humiliation – is so grave that it rules out any further relationship between the parties. Diametrically opposed to common interpretations of forgiveness as involving or making possible a re-establishment of a broken relationship, forgiveness for Arendt thus represents "der Grundsätzliche Abschied."[400] Conspicuously, in describing forgiveness as an irremediable destruction of inter-human relationships, Arendt resembles common characterizations of the *un*forgivable. In this regard, Arendt paradoxically depicts forgiveness as an unforgivable offense.

3.1.1: Christian Forgiveness and the "Poisoning of the Being of Man by Sin"

In another sense, however, interhuman forgiveness may be possible, Arendt suggests, namely in what she takes to be a specifically Christian version. Crucially, this version presupposes a fundamentally different understanding of wrongdoing, viz. wrongdoing as sin. More precisely, the Christian concept of forgiveness correlates with a concept of original sin, according to which

> das Unrechte aus einem hervorgestiegen ist, als Sünde in einem verbleibt und den bereits potentiell affizierten inneren Organismus vergiftet, sodass man Gnade und Vergebung braucht, nicht um ent-lastet, sondern um gereinigt zu werden.[401]

The Christian concept of forgiveness is, in other words, based on a negative, theological anthropology, as expressed in the doctrine of sin: an assumption of a common corrupted humanity, a shared human sinfulness. In Arendt's phrase, it "setzt […] vergifteten Menschen voraus."[402]

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[399] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "The gesture of forgiveness destroys equality and thus the foundation of human relationships, so radically that after such an act, no further relationship should be possible."
[400] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "the fundamental parting."
[401] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "the wrong emerges from one, while sin remains in one and poisons the potentially already affected inner organism, so that one needs grace and forgiveness, not in order to be un-burdened, but in order to be purified."
[402] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6-7: "presupposes poisoned humans."

Accordingly, in being sinners, we are all equal. It is worth noting that this is not equality in one's relationships with other humans; nor is it equality between humans. Rather, it is to be understood generically: it is equality in individuals' relations to their inner substratum, to what is assumed to be a shared human nature, derived from the relationship to God. Consequently, it is equality in being alike, equality as sameness. Arendt remarks that this is equality not before the law, but before nature, characterizing it as "eine Art negative Solidarität, die aus dem Begriff der Erbsünde, d.h. aus der Vorstellung, dass wir alle vergiftet geboren sind, entspricht."[403] Rather than stemming from or signifying concrete deeds, sin is an ontological condition and a description of human nature.

In her depiction of sin, Arendt clearly draws on Nietzsche. While in the opening text she does not explicitly refer to Nietzsche's attacks on Christian notions of sin, she does so in an entry written one year later. In this entry, which is a commentary on Nietzsche's *Wille zur Macht,* she quotes a statement by Nietzsche that Christian sin is tantamount to condemning human existence [*Dasein verurteilen*], and she credits Nietzsche for his exposure of "die Vergiftung des Seins des Menschen durch die Sünde."[404]

The solidarity and equality that is involved in Christian forgiveness demands from the forgiving person a "Selbst-Reflexion auf eigenes Schuldigwerden-können;" a meditation on one's own sinfulness and ability to do wrong, and, accordingly, an acknowledgement that one could have potentially committed the same wrong or something equally wrong.[405] Since it is *potential* evil and wrongdoing, it is not "only" that the forgiver is supposed to undertake a comprehensive self-examination of all that (s)he has done wrong (rather than focusing on the concrete wrongdoing and the relationship to the perpetrator); the key point is rather that the forgiver must imagine what evil and wrongdoing (s)he might perpetrate in the future, thereby realizing that (s)he, by virtue of a shared human sinfulness, is able to "match" the wrongdoing that (s)he has been subjected to and do something equally wrong and evil. This confuses reality and possibility, as it levels out the distinction between what the wrongdoer has actually done and what the victim hypothetically could have done: "in der Verzeihung […] wird das, was der Andere getan hat, zu dem, was ich selbst hätte tun können."[406] Thus, the negative solidarity, "die Solidarität des Schuldigseins," consists of

[403] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4, 6: "a type of negative solidarity that comes out of the concept of original sin, i.e. out of the view that we are all born poisoned."
[404] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 107 (July 1951). Moreover, as will be clarified below, Arendt alludes to, and takes issue with, Augustine.
[405] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "self-reflection about one's capacity to become guilty."
[406] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "in forgiveness […] what the other has done becomes that which I myself could have done."

the conviction that "jeder jedes hätte tun können."[407] In Arendt's view, this signifies a profound distrust in and suspicion of human nature – toward both oneself and one's fellow humans. Christian forgiveness

> entspringt der christlichen Solidarität zwischen Menschen, die allzumal Sünder sind und sich selbst wie ihren Mitmenschen alles, auch das Böseste, zutrauen. Es ist eine Solidarität, gegründet auf dem fundamentalen Misstrauen in die menschliche Substanz.[408]

The result of ignoring the difference between possibility and reality is that the forgiver is no less sinful than the wrongdoer. This leads to the claim that the forgiver is not in a position to judge the perpetrator. The assumption is that in order to be in a position to judge, one must be immaculate, sinless, and infallible, that is, divine. Thus, to forgive on the basis of a shared human sinfulness and out of a negative solidarity with the sinner implies forgiving on the grounds of not being in a position to judge. For Arendt, Christian forgiveness reflects a distrust in the human capacity to judge [*urteilen*].[409] To forgive is to refrain from judging. In other words, forgiveness is not an expression of judgement; quite the contrary: it presupposes a renunciation of judgement.

Arendt juxtaposes Christian forgiveness with revenge [*Rache*]. In Arendt's analysis, revenge and forgiveness constitute a pair of concepts: they belong together as "corresponding opposites."[410] Like forgiveness, revenge is connected to the idea of a contaminated human nature and the negative solidarity of being sinful.[411] But while forgiveness mirrors the wrongdoing in the imagination – in imagining that one, qua being human, potentially could have done the same – revenge mirrors the wrongdoing in reality: it pays back the wrong that one has been subjected to. This corresponds to the negative solidarity in the sense that the impetus to the act of revenge is the conviction that one, by virtue of a shared sinful human nature, is capable of doing something equally wrong. In other words, this conviction provides confidence to the avenger that (s)he is able to pay back the wrong, no matter how grave it was.

Notably, Arendt thus describes not only forgiveness, but also revenge as assuming a corrupted human nature. In this regard, revenge is also linked to Christianity. But is such an assumption really a precondition for revenge? Is it not possible to take revenge without such an

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[407] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6, 4: "the "solidarity of being sinful;" "
[408] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "arises from the Christian solidarity between human beings who are all sinners and who trust themselves as well their fellow-human beings—even the most evil. It is a solidarity based on a fundamental mistrust of the human substance."
[409] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7.
[410] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4: "Als sich entsprechende Gegensätze gehören Verzeihung und Rache zusammen."
[411] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6.

assumption? Even if Arendt's characterization of revenge seems to imply so, this is clearly implausible and hardly what she meant. What she does seem to suggest—although she does not explicate it—is that the scope of revenge would be more limited without this assumption. This is not to say that Arendt claims revenge to be a Christian virtue; but the negative Christian anthropology—the belief that all humans have an unlimited potential to do wrong, or, to repeat Arendt's phrase, that "jeder jedes hätte tun können," and that the Christian "sich selbst wie ihren Mitmenschen alles, auch das Böseste, zutrauen"—provides for an unlimited potential for revenge.[412] Needless to say, to link Christian anthropology with an extended—indeed, an unlimited—potential for taking revenge and settling scores is controversial, bearing in mind the fact that Christians usually define themselves as those who do not seek revenge.

Although revenge, unlike forgiveness, mirrors the wrong in reality, it is not able to come to terms with reality either. Revenge and forgiveness both make a "hubristic attempt to undo what was done."[413] Forgiveness, as already explained, does not stick to reality, to what has actually been done, but rather enters into speculations about one's own sinfulness and the possibility that one might too have committed the same wrong. Similarly, revenge has a "problem with reality," Arendt contends:

> Die Rache kann zwar die Wirklichkeit auch nicht einfach auslöschen, aber überspringt sie, indem sie aus der Realität des Erleidens sofort die Re-aktion macht. Reaktion ist wahrscheinlich der äusserste Gegensatz der Aktion. Von nun an spielt sich im rein Subjektiven, Re-aktiven ab.[414]

Revenge is thus essentially a re-action. Forgiveness, in Christian terms, is in turn a sort of non-action: it is "Verzicht auf irgendein Tun in der Welt."[415] More precisely, Arendt defines forgiveness negatively, as refraining from revenge: "Der Verzeihende verzichtet sich darauf, sich zu rächen, weil er ja auch schuldig sein können."[416] Accordingly, "Verzeihung zwischen Menschen kann nur heissen: Verzicht, sich zu rächen, schweigen und vorübergehen."[417] Consequently, not only in the "hubristic version," but also in a Christian interpretation, forgiveness means to separate, to take

[412] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6, 4. den
[413] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "hybriden Versuch macht, Geschehenes ungeschehen zu machen." As we shall see, in later entries, Arendt changes her position, as she begins to argue that forgiveness is directed to the person, not the deed.
[414] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6.
[415] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "to renounce acting in the world." This reflects Arendt's well-known criticism of Christianity for being unworldly; see below.
[416] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4.
[417] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "Forgiveness between humans can only mean: to renounce revenge, to keep silent, and pass by."

leave. In this regard, forgiveness and revenge are opposites, since the avenger "always stays close to the other and does not really terminate the relationship."[418] Revenge, in other words, preserves the relationship to the other, albeit in a negative way.

In Arendt's construal of Christianity, there are thus merely two ways of facing injustice: either to react (revenge) or not to act (forgiveness): "Innerhalb der christlichen Welt ist in der Tat die Alternative zwischen Verzeihung – d.h. christlichem Verzicht auf irgendein Tun in der Welt – und der Re-aktion der Rache unausweichlich."[419]According to Arendt, however, there is another way of facing injustice, one that she proposes as the humanly proper response, viz. reconciliation [*Versöhnung*].

3.1.2: Reconciliation

That Arendt proposes reconciliation as a corrective to the Christian concept of forgiveness may sound somewhat odd, bearing in mind the fact that reconciliation is a key Christian concept. What is more, it may appear counter-intuitive, since reconciliation is usually—and not only in a Christian interpretation—seen as being intimately related to forgiveness. Arendt's proposal, however, is an example of a characteristic Arendtian maneuver: she employs familiar terms in unfamiliar ways, thereby contesting and negotiating their proper meanings. In this manner, Arendt understands reconciliation in a very particular sense. For one thing, as should be clear from her critique of forgiveness, she does not link reconciliation to forgiveness, let alone see it as resulting from forgiveness. Arendt's main contentions are that reconciliation, as opposed to forgiveness and revenge, is based on judgment, and that reconciliation constitutes a new concept of solidarity – a political one – from which the notion of sin is excluded.

Reconciliation originates from accepting and coming to terms with what is fated [*Sich-abfinden mit dem Geschickten*].[420] This is related to a fundamental gratitude for what is given [*Dankbarkeit für das Gegebene*].[421] What is given, Arendt points out, includes oneself, insofar as one has not created oneself. Faced with this existential condition, there are basically two contrasting responses, two basic modes of existence. The first is a fundamental gratitude, consisting of an existential gratefulness that one has been given being. The other mode, by contrast, is a fundamental ressentiment, an unwillingness to come to terms with what is given and to accept the existential fact

[418] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 3: "[…] Rache immer nah am Anderen bleibt und die Beziehung gerade nicht abreisst."
[419] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6.
[420] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4.
[421] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4.

that "being is something that I cannot make and have not made myself."[422] Reconciliation with what is fated, contends Arendt, is only possible on the basis of a fundamental, existential gratitude.

With regard to Arendt's description of ressentiment, the association that immediately springs to mind is that of Nietzsche, the preeminent theorist of ressentiment. In an entry written one month after her opening text, Arendt makes explicit her debts to Nietzsche. Furthermore, this entry adds to the impression that Arendt developed her conceptualization in "oppositional dialog" with traditional Christian concepts. Gratitude, Arendt writes,

> ist keine christliche Tugend, kommt im Christentum nicht vor, sondern ist abgelöst von der Ergebenheit in den Willen Gottes, d.h. eigentlich von der Überwindung des Ressentiments gegen Gott. Dankbarkeit ist frei, im Gegensatz zur Ergebenheit, hat nicht zu tun mit Gottesdienst.[423]

Expanding on Nietzsche's theory of ressentiment, Arendt identifies an escalating series of stages:

> Aus dem von Nietzsche gesehenen Diener-Ressentiment gegen den göttlichen Herren entspringt das tiefere Ressentiment gegen alle Realität, sofern sie gegeben ist und nicht vom Menschen hergestellt wird. Aus dieser entspringt dann das Ressentiment gegen das von andern Menschen Gemachte, d.h. gegen die gesamte Welt.[424]

While Arendt is more concerned with criticizing Christianity than with positively defining her own corrective concept of gratitude, this much is clear: she stresses the importance of what one might call givenness. If, in the quotation above, we replace "ressentiment against" with "acceptance of and gratitude for," we can, as it were, negatively deduce what Arendt means: acceptance of and gratitude for things that humans have not – and could not – have made, as well as for what other humans have made. This seems to correspond, respectively, to *Dankbarkeit für das Gegebene* and *Sich-abfinden mit dem Geschickten*.

Arendt links her Nietzschean critique of ressentiment to her accusation that Christianity is based upon a profoundly negative anthropology:

> Aber des Christentums Misstrauen gegen die Natur ist auch ein Mangel an Dankbarkeit; ihm liegt ein Misstrauen gegen das der menschlichen Souveränität

[422] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4: "dass Sein überhaupt so etwas ist, was ich nicht selbst machen kann und nicht gemacht habe."
[423] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 10-11 (July 1950). "Gratitude is not a Christian virtue, it does not appear in Christianity, but is detached from submission to the will of God, i.e. strictly speaking from the overcoming of ressentiment against God. Gratitude is free, unlike submission, it no longer has anything to do with serving God."
[424] Arendt. "From the servant's ressentiment against his divine master, seen by Nietzsche, stems the deeper ressentiment against all reality, provided it is preexisting and not created by man. From this then springs the ressentiment against that which is made by other men, i.e. against the entire world."

> Entzogene zugrunde. Christliche Freiheit ist natur-feindlich, nämlich besagt Souveränität—Unabhängigkeit von oder Herrschaft über die Natur.[425]

That Christian religiosity should imply a lack of acceptance or distrust of circumstances beyond human control is, indeed, an unusual criticism. Does not Christianity—like most other religions—rather promote acceptance? Further, one might ask if Arendt's idea of givenness—even though she does not qualify the giver– does not in fact bear an affinity to theological, creational ideas? Arendt's criticism seems to be driven by a Nietzschean concern that the world—"this world"—is subordinated to another world, on the basis of which human life and human nature are devaluated and distrusted. In other words, the Christian duality of worlds is an obstacle to being at home in this world, to an unqualified commitment to this world and its inhabitants; it prevents an appreciation of the world in its own right and for its own sake. Arendt sees this as a lack of gratitude for and acceptance of this world as it is, of human life and human conditions.

Inter-human reconciliation is no sham act [*Scheinvorgang*], Arendt maintains, juxtaposing reconciliation with the first idea of forgiveness she discussed (that is, the hubris-ridden one). In reconciliation, one does not seek to undertake what is humanly impossible. The offended party does not hold out the prospect of being able to free the wrongdoer from the burden of the wrong or to undo what is done, nor does (s)he acts as if (s)he was in a superior position. What takes place in reconciliation is something considerably more modest: that the wronged person chooses freely to share – not to remove – the burden that the wrongdoer carries. As Arendt puts it, using the image of wrongdoing as a burden on one's shoulders: "Der sich Versöhnende lädt sich einfach die Last, die der Andere ohnehin trägt, freiwillig mit auf die Schultern."[426] If for the perpretrator, the burden of the wrong is self-imposed, something that (s)he has loaded on him- or herself, for the wronged person, it is "was ihm geschickt wurde."[427] Thus, compared to what is (imagined to be) achieved in forgiveness, reconciliation accomplishes very little; in Arendt's words, "verzweifelt wenig."[428]

However, as opposed to Christian forgiveness, reconciliation sticks to reality, to what actually happened. For Arendt, this is the key point: "dass Wirklichkeiten nicht im Möglichkeiten

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[425] Arendt. "But Christianity's distrust of nature is also a lack of gratitude; at the root of it is a distrust of that which is beyond human sovereignty. Christian freedom is inimical to nature, viz., signifies sovereignty—independence from or dominion over nature."
[426] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4: "The reconciling person simply voluntarily takes upon his shoulders the burden that the other person bears."
[427] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4.
[428] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 4: "desperately little."

zurückwervandelt werden, und dass anderseits keine Selbst-Reflexion auf eigenes Schuldigwerden-können statthat." That is, "[d]ie Versöhnung versöhnt sich mit einer Wirklichkeit, unabhängig von aller Möglichkeit."[429] Moreover, unlike hubris-ridden forgiveness, reconciliation does not destroy the equality of human relationships; on the contrary, this is exactly what it restores. It does so since the wronged person chooses to share the burden of the wrong.

This leads Arendt to what is a central, albeit little developed, claim in her text: "Politisch gesprochen setzt die Versöhnung einen neuen Begriff der Solidarität."[430] This is not a negative solidarity. Unlike the Christian concept of forgiveness, reconciliation does not *presuppose* solidarity; solidarity is the outcome, not the foundation or starting point, of reconciliation: "Die Versöhnung setzt handelnde, und möglicherweise Unrecht tuende, Menschen, aber keine vergifteten Menschen voraus."[431] If the Christian notions of forgiveness and sin, in Arendt's reading, are associated with introspection and with the abstract idea of universal human guilt stemming from one's "contaminated soul," reconciliation is concerned with inter-human relationships, with acting people and their concrete wrongdoings. Accordingly, while forgiveness correlates with guilt understood as sin, reconciliation correlates with concrete wrongs – expressed in the image of a burden on one's shoulders: "Übernommen als Last, die der Andere verursacht hat, wird nicht die Schuld—d.h. ein psychologischer Fakt—sondern das wirklich geschehene Unrecht."[432]

As becomes clear, Arendt criticizes guilt for being merely a psychological circumstance, detached from the actually committed deed. One might ask, however, if it is not Arendt herself who psychologizes *Schuld*, using the term as a designation for what is commonly referred to as *Schuldgefühl* or *Schuldbewusstsein* (sense of guilt). We should here note another semantic difference between *Schuld* and *guilt* (apart from the one already mentioned: that *Schuld* also means *debt*). Whereas the English term can refer both to the deed ("the fact of having committed a specified or implied offense or crime") *and* to a "feeling of having committed wrong or failed in an obligation," the latter meaning is absent from *Schuld*.[433] Hence, the question is whether it might not have been more appropriate if Arendt, in the quotation above, had instead

[429] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "realities are not being converted back into possibilities and that, on the other hand, no self-reflection about one's capacity to become guilty takes place."
[430] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6.
[431] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6-7.
[432] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7: "The burden, which the other caused, and which will be taken up, is not guilt – i.e. a psychological fact – but the wrong that really occurred."
[433] See "Guilt, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed September 6, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/82364; "Schuld, Substantiv," DWDS – Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, accessed September 6, 2019, https://www.dwds.de/wb/Schuld.

written: "Übernommen als Last, die der Andere verursacht hat, wird nicht *das Schuldgefühl*—d.h. ein psychologischer Fakt—sondern *die Schuld*, d.h. das wirklich geschehene Unrecht"?

In any event, Arendt connects her proposal for a new concept of solidarity to a distinction between guilt and responsibility. In reconciliation, one assumes responsibility, not guilt: "Man entschliesst sich, mit-verantwortlich zu sein, aber unter keinen Umständen mit-schuldig."[434] Consequently, the solidarity resulting from reconciliation is solidarity without guilt. In Arendt's words, reconciliation involves an "elimination of guilt from the concept of solidarity."[435] Arendt's point is not simply that one refuses to become an accessory to what was done; more importantly, what is eliminated is the guilty consciousness and self-reproach that arose from reflection on one's own potential to do wrong, and the confusion of possibility and reality that this entailed. This also relates to Arendt's distinctive use of the term *Schuld*. Thus, what Arendt rejects is essentially the idea of a shared human sinfulness: "die Solidarität des Sündigseins."[436]

While the "corresponding opposite" of forgiveness is revenge, the counterpart of reconciliation is what Arendt terms "passing by [*das Vorübergehen*]" or "looking away – silence and passing by."[437] Choosing between reconciliation and *Vorübergehen* is a matter of free, individual decision. In either case, the decisive point remains that reality is respected and not confused with possibility; that one sticks to what actually happened. Arendt writes: "In reconciliation or *Vorübergehen,* what the other has done becomes what is sent to me, that which I can either accept or, as with every delivery, let lie."[438]

In her reflections on passing by, Arendt draws on Nietzsche; more precisely, the section entitled "On Passing By [*Vom Übergehen*]" in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.[439] Here, Nietzsche argues that to reconcile oneself with what happened, and more generally with the past, is a sort of *amor fatti* gesture, in which one confirms and accepts what is. In situations in which this is impossible—in which one is not strong enough to do so—one should pass by: "Where one can no longer love, there should one – *pass by*!"[440]

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[434] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7.
[435] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7: "Eliminierung der Schuld im Solidaritätsbegriff."
[436] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6.
[437] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "der abgewendete blick – schweigen und vorübergehen." Arendt uses both *Vorübergehen* (substantive) and *vorübergehen* (verb).
[438] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "In der Versöhnung oder dem Vorübergehen wird das, was der Andere *getan* hat, zu dem, was mir nur geschickt ist, das ich akzeptieren kann oder dem ich, wie jeder Schickung, aus dem Wege gehen kann."
[439] This is pointed out by the editors of *Denktagebuch*, Ursula Ludz and Ingebor Nordmann; see Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 908.
[440] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Start Publishing LLC, 2013), 260. As Roger Berkowitz has observed, Arendt also draws on Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*. See Roger Berkowitz, "Bearing Logs on Our Shoulders: Reconciliation, Non-Reconciliation, and the Building of a Common World," *Theory & Event* 14, vol. 1 (2011).

As a corrective to forgiveness and revenge, Arendt thus proposes two different ways of facing injustice: the two closely interrelated responses of reconciliation and *Vorübergehen*. While there is no difference in the gravity of the wrongs that forgiveness and revenge address, there seems to be a difference between reconciliation and *Vorübergehen*. Though Arendt does not make it explicit, it seems that *Vorübergehen* addresses graver wrongs than reconciliation. In this regard, it is not only a matter of individual preference or capacity if the offended party chooses reconciliation or *Vorübergehen*; it is also a matter of the gravity of the wrong. Notably, however, passing by is not unlimited in scope like forgiveness and revenge, and it is not a possible response to the extreme offenses that Arendt deems irreconcilable.

The above-mentioned exclusion of guilt from the solidarity of reconciliation may, on the one hand, come as a relief, Arendt suggests, since it spares one from "die Qual der Möglichkeit – die Qual, sagen zu müssen: Auch dies ist menschlich, mit der falschen (vergiften) Folgerung, auch dies hätten wir tun können."[441] Yet, on the other hand, there are clear limitations to what it is possible to reconcile or pass by; there is "eine unbarmherzige Grenze, die die Verzeihung und die Rache nicht kennen."[442] Hence, not only is reconciliation more modest than forgiveness in what it can accomplish (sharing, not removing, the burden of guilt); it is also more limited in scope, in what it is possible to share. But what is the nature or quality of irreconcilable acts, and how is the limit of reconciliation demarcated? What is this harsh limit like?

3.1.3: Setting a Limit to Reconciliation, Responsibility, and Human Solidarity

Arendt identifies – or approaches – the limit of reconciliation in several ways. Her most basic definition is: "dem, wovon man sagen muss: Dies hätte nie geschehen dürfen."[443] But what is this thing that should never have happened? Even though Arendt does not say so explicitly, she is referring to totalitarian crimes; more specifically, to the Holocaust. This is apparent from the fact that the sentence "this should never have happened" is key to her description of the Holocaust: in characterizing the Holocaust, she repeatedly uses exactly this wording.[444]

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[441] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7: "the anguish of the possibility – the anguish needed to say: This too is human, with the false (poisoned) conclusion, we could have done this too."
[442] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7: "a merciless limit which forgiveness and revenge do not recognize."
[443] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7.
[444] Perhaps the most famous example is from an interview on West German television in 1964, in which Arendt recalls her reaction when she first, in 1943, heard about Auschwitz "It was really an abyss that had opened. […] One had had the idea that everything in one way or another could be reconciled. Not this. This should never have happened [*Dies hätte nie geschehen dürfen*] […] Something happened there to which we cannot reconcile ourselves." Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains," 14; trans. modified.

Moreover, Arendt designates these extraordinary crimes *radical evil*: "Das radikal Böse ist das, was nicht hätte passieren dürfen, d.h. das, womit man sich nicht versöhnen kann." As becomes clear, rather than being a definition of what is beyond reconciliation, radical evil is a naming of it. Furthermore, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Arendt uses this as a term for totalitarian crimes. Obviously, this is another clear indication that what Arendt has in mind, when discussing the limit of reconciliation in the *Denktagebuch,* is totalitarian crimes; and, above all, the Holocaust.[445]

While Arendt in her use of the phrase "radical evil" does not explicitly refer to Kant, she does so in one of her other attempts to identify the limit of reconciliation. In Kant's classic work *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795), Arendt detects an awareness that the limit of reconciliation consists in those acts about which all one can say is that they should never have happened. More precisely, Arendt argues that Kant showed such an awareness in his definition of the rules of war, according to which "keine Handlungen vorkommen dürften, die einen späteren Frieden zwischen den Völkern unmöglich machen würden." This reference to collective subjects—to the relationship between peoples and between nations—comes quite abruptly, given that Arendt has thus far dealt solely with relationships between individuals. Arendt does not address the question as to what extent relationships between individuals are comparable to those between collective subjects. Nonetheless, this reference to Kant points to the political outlook and concern of Arendt's reflections. Moreover, it should be noted that rather than being an identification of the limit of reconciliation, it is rather an establishment of a historical precedent for recognizing that some acts render reconciliation impossible. In other words, Arendt's reference to Kant functions as a support for her claim *that* reconciliation has a limit, rather than contributing to defining *what* this limit is or what the nature of such acts is.

In addition, Arendt identifies the irreconcilable as that which "man als Schickung unter keinen Umständen akzeptieren kann, und das, woran man auch nicht schweigen vorübergehen darf."[446] If Christian forgiveness is limitless, at the price of "die Qual, sagen zu müssen: Auch dies ist menschlich," then Arendt's depiction of the limit of reconciliation, and her vehement criticism of the Christian notions of sin and forgiveness, can be read as a "post-Holocaust protest," saying no,

[445] The phrase "radical evil" comes from Kant. However, Kant does not describe radical evil as that which should never have happened, and on the whole, Arendt uses the term in a different sense; see Richard J Bernstein, "Reflections on Radical Evil: Arendt and Kant," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 85, no. 1/2 (2002): 17–30.
[446] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7.

this is not human; this we cannot come to terms with. As Arendt states in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (which she had just completed in 1950): "Just as the victims in the death factories […] are no longer 'human' in the eyes of their executioners, so this newest species of criminals [Nazi criminals] is beyond the pale even of solidarity in human sinfulness."[447]

Furthermore, Arendt links the irreconcilable to the question of punishment. The radical evil that one cannot reconcile oneself to or come to terms with is

> das, wofür man die Verantwortung nicht übernehmen kann, weil seine Folgerungen unabsehbar sind und weil es unter diesen Folgerungen keine Straffe gibt, die adäquat wäre. Das heisst nicht, dass jedes Böse bestraft werden muss; aber es muss, soll man sich versöhnen oder ihm abwenden können, bestrafbar sein.

As to the impossibility of an adequate punishment, Arendt alludes to a classic principle in the ethics of punishment: the principle of proportionality. According to this principle, the severity of punishment is to be balanced with – be in proportion to – the severity of the crime, as symbolized by Justitia's holding a pair of scales.[448] As already mentioned, *radical evil* is Arendt's term for totalitarian crimes; so, Arendt's contention is that totalitarian crimes are incommensurable with punishment. As she states in a 1946 letter to Jaspers, for such crimes "no punishment is severe enough. It may well be essential to hang Göring, but it is totally inadequate. That is, this guilt, in contrast to criminal guilt, oversteps and shatters any and all legal systems."[449]

As to Arendt's contention that irreconcilable crimes have unforeseeable consequences: the question of action having incalculable consequences becomes, as we shall see, crucial for Arendt, not least in *The Human Condition*. In her later works, however, Arendt links the question to forgiveness, not to reconciliation. In addition, while Arendt in the *Denktagebuch* links incalculable and unforeseeable consequences to radical evil, she later on describes this as a feature of action in general. What is more, Arendt begins to see this feature as an argument in favor of, not against, forgiving. Forgiveness addresses (only) the unforeseeable consequences of action, for the reason that such consequences are not intended. Unforgivable deeds, in turn, become not

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[447] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: World Publ. Co., 1962), 591. We shall return to the fact that Arendt here expresses a different view on the boundary of the negative solidarity related to the notion of human sinfulness.

[448] My reference to Justitia's pair of scales is confined to how this symbol is commonly understood today, leaving aside the interpretational history, as well as the fact that Justitia was not originally depicted with a pair of scales.

[449] Arendt to Jaspers, August 17, 1946, *Correspondence* 51-56:54. We shall return to this issue and Arendt's discussion with Jaspers.

unintended wrongs or "incalculable wrongs," but rather deliberate wrongdoing, or what Arendt calls "willed evil."[450]

Just as Arendt begins to relate the question of unforeseeable deeds to forgiveness rather than reconciliation, so she increasingly begins to link the limits of punishment to the limits of forgiveness rather than the limits of reconciliation. As she states in *The Human Condition* (1958):

> men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish and (…) they are unable to punish what has turned out be unforgivable. This is the true hallmark of those offenses which, since Kant, we call 'radical evil' and about whose nature so little is known, even to us who have been exposed to one of their rare outbursts on the public scene.[451]

As we shall see, this "replacement" of reconciliation with forgiveness is connected to a reinterpretation of forgiveness, and the relationship between punishment and forgiveness becomes a touchstone in Arendt's subsequent debate with W. H. Auden. While these issues concerning Arendt's later works will be explored in the following chapters, it is of relevance to the analysis of the *Denktagebuch* that Arendt, with her remarks on punishment, draws on her earlier writings. Again, her correspondence with Jaspers is significant, most particularly their discussion of the Nuremberg Trial.

There appears to be a remarkable difference and discontinuity between Arendt's account of responsibility in "Organized Guilt" and in the *Denktagebuch*. During the five-year period between authoring "Organized Guilt" and inaugurating the *Denktagebuch*, Arendt has changed her mind and developed her account considerably. While Arendt in the essay also speaks of a burden, and does so in the context of advocating an idea of vicarious responsibility, there are significant differences. For one thing, in the *Denktagebuch*, Arendt sets a limit to vicarious responsibility, emphasizing that there are things "wofür man die Verantwortung nicht übernehmen kann" or "unter keinen Umständen akzeptieren kann."[452] This is related to her rejection of the idea of an unlimited, negative solidarity, as well as her warning against meditating on one's own potential to do evil, or what she calls "die Qual der Möglichkeit – die Qual, sagen zu müssen: Auch dies ist menschlich, mit der falschen (vergiften) Folgerung, auch dies hätten wir tun können."[453] In the essay, Arendt's contention was quite the opposite: counseling a meditation on our human

[450] Arendt, *Human Condition,* 240.
[451] Arendt, *Human Condition,* 243.
[452] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7: "in no way can accept."
[453] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7: "the anguish of the possibility – the anguish needed to say: This too is human, with the false (poisoned) conclusion, we could have done this too."

potential to do evil—a realization of what we, human beings, are capable of bringing about—Arendt warns against contenting oneself with "the hypocritical confession 'God be thanked, I am not like that.'" [454] On the basis of solidarity, as expressed in the idea of a common humanity, we are to assume the burden of universal responsibility, of "all crimes committed by men."[455]

It is worth underscoring the change in Arendt's anthropological outlook that has taken place during the five-year period between the essay and the opening text of the *Denktagebuch*. Recall that Arendt in the *Denktagebuch* expressed quite a remarkable faith and confidence in human nature and the realm of human affairs, just as she criticized Christian solidarity for being based on a profound distrust of human nature, suspecting humans of "alles, auch das Böseste."[456] This is markedly different in the essay; even though Arendt's intention is clearly not to give into, but rather to grasp the disaster, her rendition of humanity is somewhat bleak, depicting a degraded human race. Being authored in November 1944, this is of course unsurprising. What is remarkable is that as early as her 1950 *Denktagebuch* text, she conveys faith in and commitment to human nature and human interaction.

As a corrective to forgiveness and revenge, Arendt has thus presented three alternative ways of facing injustice: the two closely interrelated responses of reconciliation and passing by, as well as what we could call the act of non-reconciliation. A fundamental difference between reconciliation and *Vorübergehen,* on the one hand, and forgiveness and revenge, on the other, is how they relate – or do not relate – to judgement. Unlike forgiveness and revenge, reconciliation – as well as its alternative, *Vorübergehen* – is based on judgment. Reconciliation is an expression of trust in humans being able to judge; it signifies, as it were, the courage to judge. The judging trait in reconciliation explains why reconciliation is challenging – why it is tempting to forgive or avenge, instead, on the grounds of not being able to judge: "das ist das eigentlich Furcht-einflössende: dass wir imstande sein sollen zu urteilen, ohne Einfühlung, ohne die Voraussetzung der Möglichkeit, ohne Reflexion auf uns selbst."[457]

[454] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131.
[455] Arendt, "Organized Guilt," 131.
[456] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 6: "anything, even the most evil."
[457] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 7-8.

Arendt closes her text by relating her interpretation of judgment and reconciliation to a certain notion of God. For Arendt, trust in the human ability to judge is not linked to irreligiousness, but rather to some sort of a "non-theistic" idea of God:

> Solches Urteilen wiederum ist möglich nur, wenn man eine Gottesvorstellung hat, die nun in vollem Ernst alles offen lässt, d.h. wenn man in nur menschlichen Masstäben urteilt und dabei ausdrücklich offen lässt, dass Gott alles vielleicht gar nicht oder vielleicht ganz anders beurteilt.[458]

Arendt does not specify what sort of notion of God she has in mind. But this much is clear: it is a wholly transcendent notion of God that provides no moral or political guidance; a notion of God that regards belief in such guidance as being, at once, illusory – a false security – and hubris-ridden: "Nur wenn man nicht mit der verlogenen Lautverstärkung, als sei die eigene Stimme auch Gottes Stimme, urteilt, kann man ein Leben ohne Rache und Verzeihung, die ja beide Gottes Zorn und Gottes Gnade nachzunahmen vorgeben, aushalten."[459]

Thus, not only do Arendt's concepts of judgment and reconciliation represent a certain understanding of inter-human relationships and of the shared, political world; they are also associated with a certain notion of a relationship to God, one that differs markedly from the one Arendt identifies in the Christian idea of forgiveness of sin. Since Arendt is not known as a religious thinker, it may seem surprising that she ends her text by relating her idea of judgment and reconciliation to a meditation on man's relationship to God. This is not, however, the only religious element in the text; there are actually some religious aspects through-out the text, such as Arendt's hubris charge against inter-human forgiveness, her claim that only God can forgive, and her juxtaposing of forgiveness between humans with the relationship between God and man, as well as the theological aura of her meditation on the gift of being (to which we shall return below). Yet it is important to note that whereas the kind of judgment and reconciliation that Arendt advocates does not presuppose "the death of God," it does, on the other hand, not presuppose a religious interpretation either. In other words, it is not at odds with or incompatible with a non-religious worldview. In any case, insofar as Arendt rejects the idea of theologically qualified ethics or politics, this *Denktagebuch* text does conform to Arendt's famous, programmatic statement of "thinking without banister."[460]

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[458] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 8.
[459] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 8.
[460] "I call it thinking without a banister. […] That is, as you go up and down the stairs you can always hold on to the banister so that you don't fall down. But we have lost this banister." Arendt, *Thinking Without a Banister*, 480.

In an entry dated April 1951, Arendt develops further her critical reflections on guilt, juxtaposing again an ontological notion of guilt, a being guilty, with mere wrongdoing:

> Was so schwer zu verstehen ist, ist, dass Unrecht Permanenz und sogar Kontinuität haben kann. Dies nennt man Schuld – Unrecht als Kontinuität des Nicht-wider-ungeschehen-machen-Könnens. Dadurch bekommt das blosse Unrecht-tun die Realität des Schuldig-seins.[461]

Guilt is thus related to irreversibility. It signifies some sort of – Arendt is not very specific on this point – continued impact of a committed wrong, which implies that the deed – the wrong – is transformed into signifying a mode of being. But how does this transformation occur, and how is this continuity to be understood – is it that the guilty person continues to do wrong, or is it that a deed done in the past continues to have consequences that cannot be remedied? In continuation of the quotation above, Arendt develops a bit more on the transformation:

> Dies kann verhindert werden nur durch gegenseitige Hilfe: Ob das Unrecht, das getan wurde, zur Schuld wird, hängt 1. davon ab, ob der Andere sofort bereit ist zu korrigieren, 2. ob ich bereit bin, dann nicht weiter zu insistieren, d.h. mich nicht als einer verhalte, dem hier Unrecht geschehen ist. Dies ist der Sinn der Versöhnung, bei der, im Unterscheid zum Verzeihen, immer beide Teile beteiligt sind. Dies jedenfalls meinte Jesus mit dem „wie wir vergeben unseren Schuldigern" auf den eine Seite und dem „gehe hin und sündige fortan nicht mehr" auf der anderen. Was er gerade auf der Welt entfernen wollte, war das Schuldig-sein.[462]

There are several remarkable things in this passage. First that Arendt suggests that the transformation from mere wrongdoing to being guilty can in fact be prevented. This prevention – this remedy – Arendt refers to as reconciliation, not forgiveness; and she still, in this 1951 entry, juxtaposes it to forgiveness. Whereas Arendt later in the *Denktagebuch*, as well as in her later published writings on forgiveness, argue that forgiveness is a genuinely mutual phenomenon, she maintains here that forgiveness, unlike reconciliation, is a "non-mutual" (or at least not necessarily mutual) phenomenon. In conformity with her distinctively "non-intersubjective" account of forgiveness in the first entry, where she presented forgiveness as a unilateral demand on the

[461] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 69 (April 1951): "What is so difficult to understand is that wrong can have permanence and even continuity. This is what one calls guilt – wrong as the continuity of what can never again be made-undone. In this way, mere wrong-doing gains the reality of being-guilty."

[462] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 69: "This can be prevented only through mutual help: whether the wrong which is done will result in guilt depends 1. upon whether the other is immediately ready to correct, 2. whether I am ready, then to no longer insist, that is, not to behave as one to whom wrong has done wrong. This is the meaning of reconciliation, by which (in contrast to forgiveness) both sides always take part. This is what Jesus in any case meant by 'as we have forgiven our debtors', on the one hand, and then 'go forth and sin no more', on the other. Here he wanted to remove being-guilty from the world."

offender, requiring no interaction between the offender and the offended, Arendt thus implies that forgiveness is (or can be) a solo performance.

As to Arendt's first criterion: it is remarkable that Arendt is concerned solely with a change of behavior and does not include any such traditional demands like admission of guilt, expression of remorse, repentance or atonement. In this regard, insofar as there is no guilty dealing with the past, Arendt's criterion is present and future oriented. This points toward a remark Arendt makes in her chapter on forgiveness in *The Human Condition*. In discussing how Jesus' teachings on forgiveness should be interpreted, she criticizes that the New Testament Greek word *metanoein* is translated as *repent*: "*metanoein* means 'change of mind' and – since it serves also to render the Hebrew *shuv* – 'return,' 'trace back one's steps,' rather than 'repentance' with its psychological emotional overtones; what is required is: change your mind and 'sin no more,' which is almost the opposite of doing penance."[463]

But why is Arendt critical to repentance? And why do her criteria not include any such thing as atonement, repentance, or an acknowledgement from the perpetrator to the victim of having acted blameworthy? Even though repentance does not, like the negative solidarity of sin, blur the distinction between reality and possibility, it seems that it to Arendt bears resemblance to the critical self-scrutinization connected to the Christian idea of a shared human sinfulness. Yet, as in the first entry, the question is why Arendt terms it *Versöhnung*—bearing in mind that *Sühnung* (atonement) is inherent in the very term? Would it not have been more in tune with her line of argument if she had used another term?

In what way does the citation above add to an interpretation of "Unrecht als Kontinuität des Nicht-wider-ungeschehen-machen-Könnens"? From Arendt's criteria we can, so to speak, negatively approach an answer: a wrong obtains continuity when the offender does not change behavior and / or the offended sticks to a victim role – if that keeps defining his or her role and identity in relation to the other, and (s)he behaves in an injured way.

Furthermore, Arendt introduces, in the cited passage, what becomes a key figure in her writings on forgiveness: Jesus. As in her later writings, Arendt uses her interpretation of Jesus to contest (her construal of) traditional Christian notions of sin and forgiveness. Thus, she refers to

[463] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 240. As we shall see, Arendt contends so in a discussion of Luke 17: 3-4. "And if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Arendt's suggestion is that "I repent" should be replaced with "I changed my mind."

Jesus to buttress her critique of an ontological notion of guilt based on a negative anthropology and in support of her corrective account. Expanding on this juxtaposition, Arendt writes:

> Dem christlichen Begriff von einem „natura" pervertierten, sündigen Sein des Menschen entspricht die Unfähigkeit, Unrecht-tun oder Unrecht-getan-haben von Schuldig-geworden-Sein zu scheiden. Jedes Unrecht-getan-haben wird zum Beweis und damit zur Aktualisierung des Schuldig-seins. Während Jesus umgekehrt sogar versuchte, das Schuldig-sein in einen blosses Unrecht-getan-Haben aufzulösen. Das Unrecht heftet sich nur deshalb an den Menschen wie das Fleckfieber, weil er sich einredet, er sei sündig schon gewesen, bevor er irgendetwas Unrechtes tat.[464]

Arendt thus contends that the transformation from mere wrongdoing to a being guilty is predicated on the negative anthropology of the Christian doctrine of sin, the assumption of a common corrupted humanity. A wrong only obtains continuity and permanence – it only "attaches to" a human – if one imagines oneself being guilty before one has done anything wrong. From this perspective, every single wrong is seen as an actualization of one's being guilty and is, accordingly, considered a proof of the hypothesis that human being is guilty. Rather than being something that one acquires by doing wrong, it is as if guilt is used to explain the wrong: one has done wrong because one is guilty.

As it appears from the citation, Arendt presents the traditional Christian notion of sin as being out of tune – in fact, at odds – with Jesus' teachings. Central to Arendt's juxtaposing is *Tun* (doing) vs. *Sein* (being): *Unrecht-tun* vs. *Schuldig-sein*; *Unrecht-getan-haben* vs. *Schuldig-geworden-Sein*. When sticking to the actual deed—to "einen blosses Unrecht-getan-Haben"—the wrong is not linked to a negative anthropology or solidarity, to an assumption of a common corrupted humanity. By rejecting this distrust in the human substratum, and by teaching the two aforementioned criteria of reconciliation, "Arendt's Jesus" is a model of how to deal with wrongdoing.

As in the first entry, Arendt uses the term *Schuld* in a rather idiosyncratic way. This is not least apparent in her critique of not separating doing wrong from becoming guilty – for is it not plain and commonplace that committing a wrong means becoming guilty? And what is the link between this critique and her critique of the Christian notion of a shared human sinfulness? If guilt is related to a committed wrong, is it then an ontological notion of guilt?

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[464] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 69: "The Christian concept of a perverted nature, sinful being of man corresponds to the incapacity to differentiate doing-wrong or having-done-wrong from being-guilty. Every having-done-wrong becomes evidence of and as such the actualization of being-guilty. Jesus, in contrast, attempted to dissolve being-guilty into mere having-done-wrong. Wrong therefore attaches itself to people like typhus fever, because they convince themselves that they were already sinful before they did anything wrong."

Let us return to the question what Arendt means by "Unrecht als Kontinuität des Nicht-wider-ungeschehen-machen-Könnens"? From Arendt's criteria we can, so to speak, negatively approach an answer: a wrong obtains continuity when the offender does not change behavior and / or the offended sticks to a victim role – if that keeps defining his / her role and identity in relation to the other and (s)he behaves in an injured way. Additionally, for a wrong to obtain continuity, it requires a negative anthropology, an assumption of being guilty "beforehand;" it requires what Arendt, in an entry written three months later, calls "die Vergiftung des Seins des Menschen durch die Sünde."[465]

3.1.4: Undifferentiated Guilt and Distrust in Human Nature: Augustine as Polemic Frame of Reference

In her depiction and vehement renunciation of the Christian notion of sin, Arendt, as we have touched upon, draws on Nietzsche. Additionally, in her use of a medical language (sin as poison and disease, and forgiveness and grace as purification or detoxication), and in her representation of an all-pervading human sinfulness and an utterly negative Christian anthropology, Arendt polemically alludes to Augustine. Augustine is the creator of the interpretation of Genesis 3 as the "Fall," asserting that the action of Adam and Eve corrupted their nature, and, further, that this corruption has been inherited to all humans. The inheritance is to be understood biologically: the sin of Adam and Eve is an infection transmitted by way of conception. Corresponding to the depiction of sin as a hereditary disease, transmitted from generation to generation, Christ is "the divine physician," as the church historian Alister McGrath puts it, and "salvation is understood in essentially sanative or medical terms."[466] As Augustine writes in his treatise *On Nature and Grace,* in which he identifies the devastating consequences of the Fall, human nature "requires a physician, because it is not healthy." The church is like a hospital for the sick, and the medicine is grace, which is "not bestowed as a reward for merits, but is given freely [*gratis*]."[467]

In Arendt's dissertation, we can find support for the claim that she, with her harsh criticism in the *Denktagebuch* of the Christian notion of sin, in particular is targeting Augustine's conception of sin. Thus, commenting on Augustine's concept of original sin, Arendt remarks that "[h]umanity's common descent is its common share in original sin. This sinfulness, conferred with

[465] Arendt, *Denktagebuch,* 107 (July 1950).
[466] Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 82.
[467] Augustine, *On Nature and Grace,* quoted in McGrath, *Historical Theology,* 85.

birth, necessarily attaches to everyone. There is no escape from it. It is the same in all people. The equality of the situation means that all are sinful. […] This equality is the predominant fact that wipes out all distinctions."[468] In support of her reading, Arendt quotes, among others, Augustine's claim that "'all human nature was corrupted by him [Adam] which […] accounts for the misery of all humanity.'"[469] Also, she notes that the Augustinian man's "being is sinful prior to any free choice."[470]

3.2: Arendt's Turn to Approving Forgiveness

In an entry dated July 1951, Arendt for the first time depicts forgiveness positively. By the same token, she conceives an intersubjective understanding of forgiveness:

> Wenn man (mit recht) sagt, dass nur die Liebe vergeben kann, vergisst man meist: Nur denen, die geliebt werden, kann (und darf) man vergeben; *nicht* das Unrecht, das ich getan haben, sondern nur *mir*, der geliebt wird. Dies alles wird meist vergessen, weil man vergisst, dass Liebe, wenn sie schon ein „Gefühl" sein soll, nur als gegenseitiges Gefühl existiert. Das Wort der Evangelien: Ihr wird viel vergeben werden, denn sie hat viel geliebt, ergibt einen Sinn erste, wenn man interpretiert: Also wird ihr von *Vielen* vergeben werden. Es wird ihr bestimmt nicht um ihres berühmten „Gefühls" willen vergeben werden.[471]

Notably, Arendt here introduces a distinction between person and deed, between wrongdoer and wrong, arguing that forgiveness is directed solely toward the person. Arendt employs this distinction in her published writings on forgiveness. For instance, she does so in *The Human Condition*, where she also links it to the same New Testament parable (of two debtors; Luke 7:47), contending that Jesus recognized this distinction. In *The Human Condition*, however, she criticizes the belief that forgiveness is exclusively connected to love, suggesting that this belief explains why forgiveness "has always been deemed unrealistic and inadmissible in the public realm." Or, as she states in her essay on Bertolt Brecht: "We always forgive some*body*, never some*thing*, and this is the reason that people think that only love can forgive."[472]

While this entry bears witness to Arendt's conception of an intersubjective account of forgiveness, she still does not advocate a political relevance for forgiveness, or link forgiveness to

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[468] Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 112; Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 102.
[469] Arendt, *Love*, 102.
[470] Arendt, *Love*, 103.
[471] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 110 (July 1951): "If one says (with justification) that only love can forgive, one largely forgets: Only those who are loved can (and may) be forgiven; *not* the wrong that I have done, but only *me*, who is loved. All of this is largely forgotten, because one forgets that love, if it is taken to be a "feeling," exists only as a mutual feeling. – The Word of the Gospels: She will be forgiven much, for she has loved much, only makes sense if one reads: So she will be forgiven by *many*. She will certainly not be forgiven for the sake of her renowned 'feeling.'"
[472] Arendt, "What Is Permitted to Jove…," 254.

her political theory of action. In fact, the first time she explicitly links forgiveness to her theory of action is in an entry from January 1953:

> Das Element der Unsicherheit im Handeln, das seit Plato [dazu] diente es gegen das Tun und das Denken zu diskreditieren, beruht auf unserem Nicht-Wissen, was der Mensch, was jeder Mensch ist, und dass wir eine Ahnung davon erst haben, wenn er nicht mehr ist. Deshalb ist kein Handeln möglich ohne gegenseitiges Verzeihen (das in der Politik Versöhnung heisst); es beruht wie bei Jesus auf der Erkenntnis, dass wir nie ganz wissen können, was wir tun.[473]

Arendt here touches upon what would become an important theme in *The Human Condition,* namely her meta-historical narrative of the neglect of action. In this entry, Arendt for the first time contends that forgiveness is indispensable to action—that action would not be possible without forgiveness. This is due to the unpredictability of action—that we cannot quite control or foresee the outcome when acting. In support of these rudimentary proposals, which are to become central in her later, published work on forgiveness, Arendt again invokes Jesus; more precisely, the words that Luke ascribes to Jesus on the cross: "And Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"[474] Now, Arendt begins to refer to this not only as grounds for forgiving, but also to argue that forgiveness is limited in scope and does not apply to intentional wrongdoing. As she controversially states in *The Human Condition,* building clearly on her entry in *Denktagebuch*: "The reason for [Jesus'] insistence on a duty to forgive is clearly 'for they know not what they do' and it does not apply to […] willed evil."[475]

Furthermore, in this entry, we again see that Arendt's approval of forgiveness is connected to the fact that she now understands forgiveness as a genuinely intersubjective and mutual phenomenon. Additionally, where she initially presented forgiveness as being fundamentally different and distinct from reconciliation, she now states that reconciliation is a term for forgiveness in politics. Arendt does not, however, expand on or qualify her assertion that forgiveness and reconciliation should be this closely related; and, in an entry written only two months later, in March 1953, she differentiates them clearly from each other. However, before doing so, Arendt comes even closer to merging forgiveness with reconciliation. She does so in an entry dated February 1953:

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[473] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 303-04 (January 1953) "The element of uncertainty in action, which has served since Plato to discredit action and thought, depends on our not-knowing what the human being is, what every human being is, and that we begin to get an inkling only when he is no more. Therefore, no action is possible without mutual forgiveness (which is called reconciliation in politics); as with Jesus, it depends on the realization that we can never completely know what we are doing."

[474] Luke 23:34.

[475] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239.

> Die Taten sind die Dinge des Handelns. Ihnen eignet einmal, dass sie von sich aus vergänglich sind, keinerlei Permanenz haben und dass sie anderseits nicht rückgängig gemacht werden können, nicht zerstörbar sind. Verzeihung, Erbarmen, Versöhnung machen nichts rückgängig, sondern führen die begonnene Handlung weiter, in einer Richtung, die nicht in ihr lag. Die Grösse dieser Verhaltensweisen liegt darin, dass sie den Automatismus des Nicht-rückgängig-zu-machen unterbrechen. Sie sind die eigentliche *spontane* Reaktion. Darin liegt ihre Produktivität: Sie setzen innerhalb eines bereits begonnenen Handlungsvollzugs einen neuen Anfang.[476]

Leaving aside for a moment the question of how forgiveness relates to reconciliation (or to mercy [*Erbarmen*], which Arendt suddenly mentions), it is remarkable that Arendt here forms her idea that forgiveness is a spontaneous reaction—a reaction that possesses the same qualities as action. Forgiveness is thus, as Arendt later states, "a mode of action."[477] This idea becomes a fundamental part of Arendt's explanation as to why forgiveness can offer a way out of the predicament of not being able to undo what was done, a predicament that Arendt has dealt with, not to say struggled with, repeatedly in the preceding entries. This points directly to Arendt's conceptualization in *The Human Condition*, where she presents forgiveness as a spontaneous reaction that can remedy what she refers to as "the predicament" and "the burden of irreversibility:" "In contrast to revenge, which is the […] automatic reaction […] and which because of the irreversibility of the action process can be expected […], the act of forgiving can never be predicted […]. [It] does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven."[478]

Arendt's argument that forgiveness acts spontaneously and can thus serve as a remedy for the predicament of irreversibility is related to the distinction that Arendt introduced previously between wrong and wrongdoer: it is because forgiveness is directed to the person—and not to the irreversible deed—that it can act spontaneously and break with the automatism and irreversibility of the action process.

In an entry written one month later, Arendt differentiates forgiveness from reconciliation:

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[476] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 312 (February 1953): "Deeds are the things of action. They are characterized by the fact that they are themselves transient, have no permanence at all, and, on the other hand, that they cannot be reversed and cannot be destroyed. Forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation do not undo anything, but rather drive the initiated action on further, in a direction which was not contained in it. The magnitude of these behaviors is that they interrupt the automatism of the irreversible. They are the actual *spontaneous* reaction. Herein lies their productiveness: They place a new beginning within an already begun action."
[477] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 238.
[478] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.

> Im Verstehen findet die alles Handeln erst ermöglichende, vorgängige *Versöhnung* mit der Welt statt. Das: Verstehen ist Verzeihen, ist ein Missverständnis dieses Tatbestandes. Verstehen hat nichts mit Verzeihen zu tun. Verzeihen impliziert immer nur: Wir wissen nicht, was wir tun. Versöhnung heisst: 'to come to terms with'; ich versöhne mich mit Realität als solcher und gehöre von nun an dieser Realität als Handelnder zu.[479]

We see here that Arendt describes reconciliation in what would later become her preferred way: as a reflexive and very general phenomenon, in which I reconcile myself with—or come to terms with—reality and the common world. That is, rather than being a mutual and reciprocal phenomenon between two or more persons, reconciliation is instead directed to the common world. Whereas forgiveness is not an expression of understanding, reconciliation is intimately connected to understanding—so intimately that Arendt, in an entry from the same month, refers to reconciliation as a mode of understanding—"understanding in the sense of reconciliation." And while Arendt describes reconciliation as a prerequisite for action, it is not itself an action or a mode of action.

The last entry we shall look at is dated June 1953. Arendt here reflects further on forgiveness and love, now connecting these to plurality:

> Das eigentlich politische Prinzip der christlichen Liebe liegt im Verzeihen. Dies nämlich kann nicht mehr in die Seele des Einzelnen verlegt werden, dafür bedarf es ein stets einen Anderen. Ich kann mich selbst beherrschen (und alle Herrschaftsverhältnisse „psychologisch" konstruieren), aber sich selbst verzeihen kann niemand. In diesem Sinne hat das Christentum wirklich mit der Pluralität der Menschen ernst gemacht.[480]

According to Arendt, forgiveness is an element of plurality within the unworldly or even anti-worldly Christian concept of love. That Arendt thus links "Christian love" to plurality is surprising, given her criticism of Christianity. Also, it is markedly different from her famous depiction in *The Human Condition* of the unworldly and even anti-political character of love. Beyond this, it is noteworthy that Arendt presents a genuinely intersubjective interpretation of forgiveness. The entry points to a passage in *The Human Condition* in which Arendt states that forgiveness corresponds "so closely to the human condition of plurality" that its "role in politics establishes a diametrically

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[479] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 331-32 (March 1953): "It is in understanding that the *reconciliation* with the world that makes all action possible occurs. This: to understand is to forgive is a misunderstanding of this fact. Understanding has nothing to do with forgiveness. Forgiveness implies solely: We do not know what we are doing. Reconciliation is: 'to come to terms with'; I reconcile myself with reality as such, and belong from now on to this reality as an acting person."

[480] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 376 (June 1953): "The real political principle of Christian love lies in forgiveness. Thus, this can no longer be located in the soul of the individual – there is always need for another person. I can only rule myself (and construct all relationships of rule 'psychologically'), but no one can forgive himself. In this way, Christianity really took the plurality of men seriously."

different set of guiding principles from the 'moral' standards inherent in the Platonic notion of rule. For Platonic rulership, whose legitimacy rested upon the domination of the self, draws its guiding principles […] from a relationship established between me and myself, so that the right and wrong of relationships with others are determined by attitudes toward one's self." Forgiveness, Arendt maintains, "rests on experiences which nobody could ever have with himself, which, on the contrary, are entirely based on the presence of others."[481]

Conclusion

To sum up and conclude: While the first entry gives the impression that Arendt's conceptualization of forgiveness in *Denktagebuch* is in contrast to, and separate from, her later, published writings, the subsequent entries testify to Arendt's conception of an intersubjective concept of forgiveness. These entries are, to be sure, rudimentary and experimental. Nonetheless, they can be regarded as formative to Arendt's conceptualization of forgiveness.

Essentially, Arendt's turn to approving forgiveness is linked to the fact that she develops an intersubjective interpretation of forgiveness. Correspondingly, Arendt begins to link forgiveness to an inter-subjective concept of guilt. In other words, she no longer sees forgiveness as correlating with a sort of existential culpability that regards guilt as a part of man's essence. At the same time, Arendt begins to argue that the wrong is not at the center of forgiveness, since forgiveness is directed solely to the person.

[481] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 237–38.

4: Forgiveness and Guilt in *The Human Condition*

We now turn to what is by far Arendt's most famous account of forgiveness—indeed, the only account considered in the vast majority of the secondary literature—that is, the one she presented in conjunction with her theory of action in *The Human Condition* (1958).[482]

Following on from the results of the previous chapters, an important task is to compare the way in which Arendt construes guilt in her writings on guilt and responsibility with 1) her account of forgiveness in *The Human Condition*; and 2) her description of guilt within that account. As outlined in the introduction, the relevance of the former is due to the fact that forgiveness correlates with guilt—that guilty humans are what makes the question of forgiveness relevant at all.[483] It adds to the significance of this task that Arendt, as we saw in chapter two, insists that guilt, in contradistinction to responsibility, cannot be a political concept, while at the same time advocating a political concept of forgiveness in *Human Condition*. Exposing this tension, the critical question is: does a political concept of forgiveness not necessarily correlate with a political concept of guilt? Attending to Arendt's notion of guilt as *trespassing* within her theory of forgiveness and action, I pursue this question further, considering whether she here advances a political concept of guilt. In other words, the question is whether Arendt's concepts of forgiveness and *trespassing* conform to her vision of political intersubjectivity. Moreover, I consider how these concepts relate to Heidegger's notions, in *Being and Time*, of *Schuld* and of *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt*. In doing so, I provide support for a central thesis of my interpretation: that Arendt, through her notion of *trespassing*, appropriates key attributes of Heidegger's existential-ontological account of *Schuld* as "being thrown into assuming responsibility;" particularly his rendition of *Schuld* following from Dasein's inability to "master the circumstances" it has been "thrown into."[484]

Beyond this, I investigate the question of how forgiveness is situated within Arendt's thought. As outlined in the introduction, my contention is that in order to unfold Arendt's account of forgiveness, one should heed not only the conceptual landscape specific to forgiveness, but also the nexus of concepts relating to Arendt's singular understanding of action. Therefore, before

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[482] See the survey of the literature in the introduction.
[483] Even if it may sound obvious that forgiveness correlates with guilt, no such comparison of Arendt's writings on forgiveness with her writings on guilt has been conducted (see the survey of the literature in the introduction).
[484] "Guilt as being thrown into assuming responsibility" is Carman's encapsulation of Heidegger's account; see Taylor Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse and Authenticity in Being and Time* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 285. For an analysis of Dasein's being-guilty as following from the unmasterable circumstances it has been thrown into, see Schalow and Denker, *Historical Dictionary of Heidegger's Philosophy*, 68–69.

turning to forgiveness and guilt, I sketch out Arendt's project in *The Human Condition* and analyze her concept of action.

4.1: Arendt's Project in *Human Condition*

Inquiring into the Western history of political thought, Arendt aims at nothing less than undertaking "a reconsideration of the human condition."[485] This she will do "from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears;" that is, against the background of totalitarianism.[486] If Arendt in *The Origins* depicted totalitarianism as a negation of the human condition, as epitomized in its "most consequential institution," the extermination camp, she now sets herself the task of exposing "general human capacities which grow out of the human condition."[487] More specifically, she seeks to conceptualize elementary capacities and experiences of humans' active life, the *vita activa.* Her wide-ranging project is, as she famously puts it, to "think what we are doing."[488] Particularly, Arendt's concern is the "public things" and political conditions—and how these can be guarded. It is key for her that our conceptualization—the way we think about what we do—corresponds to (her phenomenological analysis of) human conditions and experiences. To this end, she sets out to detect the historical origins and developments of conceptual prejudices that has led "our tradition of political thought […] to be highly selective and to exclude from articulate conceptualization a great variety of authentic political experiences."[489] At the same time, she seeks to identify historically illuminating articulations of basic components of *vita activa*, which she often discerns in types of sources not usually considered relevant for political philosophy—one example being her nomination of Jesus as "the discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs."[490]

Arendt's method, then, is a combination of phenomenological analysis and large-scaled intellectual-historical interpretation. While she critically asserts that history is "a story of action and deeds rather than of trends and forces or ideas," one may well ask if, or to what extent, this applies to her own account; at least it is safe to say that she performs a historical narrative of epic dimensions.[491] As in Nietzsche and Heidegger, the "original sinner" in Arendt's account is

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[485] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 5. I have adapted part of the following subsection from my article: Thomas Ø Wittendorff, "A Post-Holocaust Philosopher of Forgiveness: An Exploration of Hannah Arendt's Jesus," *Ideas in History* 8.1, 2015, 69–99.
[486] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 5.
[487] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 441. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 6.
[488] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 5.
[489] Arendt, 238–39.
[490] Arendt, 238.
[491] Arendt, 185.

Plato: regarding contemplative life (*vita contemplative*) as a higher form of life, Plato came to set a long-lasting "contemplative precedence." Arendt's overall agenda, accordingly, is to "rehabilitate" *vita activa*; preeminently the political aspects of it. And where Heidegger detects an oblivion of being, Arendt above all discerns an oblivion of, and a failure to appreciate, humans' political existence.

This leads us to Arendt's basic "take" on *vita activa*, namely her contention that it consists of three elementary forms of activities (which she, as Young-Bruehl notes, "announced trenchantly, without a word said about where these definitions had come from"): labor, work, and action.[492] Each correspond to a basic condition "under which life on earth has been given to man."[493] I focus on action and its corresponding condition, plurality, not only because they are key concepts for Arendt, but also for the more specific reason that she conceptualizes forgiveness as a mode of action. Therefore, we should only very briefly note that *labor* has to do with the purely biological, with upholding life by procuring food and by other activities necessary for this.[494] *Work* reflects that humans, in addition to their natural surroundings, need to create something unnatural, viz. what Arendt terms a *world*. Hence, unlike the life sustaining labor activities, work activities result in products and things that cannot at first glance be consumed or used (for instance a house). Like labor, however, work is characterized by necessity, as it is determined by the purpose of the activity, or in other words, "by the category of means and ends."[495] *Action* is "the political activity par excellence."[496] As we return to below, it differs from labor and work by being, not instrumental or teleological but free and by being constitutively inter-subjective, corresponding to the human condition of plurality. Being an inherently spontaneous and contingent activity, action is tantamount to "beginning something anew."[497]

These three activities and their respective conditions are connected to "the most general condition of human existence," namely that we are conditioned through birth and death, or what Arendt terms natality and mortality. Famously, Arendt's emphasis is on natality. As I expand on below, natality signifies "the new," spontaneity, and initiation; and while all three activities correspond to natality, Arendt underlines that there is a particularly close connection between

[492] Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 80.
[493] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 7.
[494] Arendt, 7.
[495] Arendt, 236.
[496] Arendt, 9.
[497] Arendt, 8.

natality and action: "the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something new, that is, of acting."[498]

Thus, the two fundamental conditions of action are natality and plurality. Being closely interrelated and interdependent, natality and plurality appear only in conjunction; and it is crucial to note that their "de facto" reality or presence is not a given: they exist only when they are actualized, that is, when humans are acting and speaking in concert. Notably, the conditions under which it is possible to actualize natality and plurality can be restricted or even cancelled out. It is important, then, to specify that while Arendt seeks to expose "general human capacities which grow out of the human condition and are permanent," this is provided that "the human condition itself is not changed."[499] That is, on the one hand Arendt conducts an ontological analysis of capacities universally given by the human condition, while, on the other hand, she depicts the human condition as changeable indeed—to the extent that it can be irretrievably transformed. As Arendt described it in the *Origins,* the "radical evil" of the Nazi regime was a deliberate and fundamental attack on the human condition: striving to eliminate plurality and "all unpredictability—which […] is equivalent to spontaneity"—the totalitarian regime aimed at "making human beings as human beings superfluous."[500]

4.2: Arendt's Concept of Action

Following this broad outline of Arendt's project in *The Human Condition,* we now zoom in on those aspects that are particularly relevant to her concept of forgiveness and its conceptual interrelatedness. At the center of these is Arendt's signature concept of action. This is because Arendt conceptualizes forgiveness as a mode of action; more precisely, a "self-referential" form of action that addresses "the inevitable damages resulting from action."[501] These damages are what Arendt terms *trespassing.* As outlined in the introduction, an important point of my interpretation is that in order to "unfold" Arendt's concept of forgiveness, one should take into account not only the conceptual landscape specific to forgiveness, but also the tight nexus of concepts in which Arendt's concept of action is situated. What I hope to add to the existing literature is not so much that Arendt's concept of action is situated in a web of concepts—this is by now a well-established line

[498] Arendt, 9.
[499] Arendt, 6.
[500] Letter from Arendt to Jaspers, March 4, 1951, in Arendt and Jaspers, *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers*, 166. cf. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 197.
[501] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239.

of interpretation; rather, my aim is to expose what the conceptual interrelatedness of action implies for and adds to our understanding of Arendt's concept of forgiveness.

While this task requires a general outline of this interrelatedness, some aspects of Arendt's account of action are of particular relevance from the perspective of forgiveness. In addition to exploring why and how action causes *trespassing*, the "revelatory character of action," and Arendt's attendant distinction between who and *what* one is, are of particular interest. This is because Arendt argues that in forgiveness, "*what* has been done is forgiven for the sake of *who* did it."[502] Further, in order to elucidate how forgiveness "works" on Arendt's account, it is crucial to note that action is spontaneous and that it "always establishes relationships."[503] Finally, as indicated in the title of Arendt's reflections on the political significance of forgiveness, "irreversibility and the power to forgive," as well as her distinct understanding of that power, merit special attention.[504]

4.2.1: The Risks and Predicaments of Action

If Arendt's conception of action was a "message of hope in dark times," as Canovan puts it,[505] and if Arendt's turn from scrutinizing totalitarianism to her project of recovering the dignity of the political and public world was, in Anya Topolski's phrase, a turn "from ashes to hope," it should also be pointed out that Arendt at the same time paid great attention to the risks and dangers of action.[506] Indeed, she speaks of "the enormous risks of action," as well as its "haphazardness," "calamities," "dangers," "boundlessness," "frailty," and "predicament."[507] Notably, these perils do not come from "external factors" that undermine or restrict the conditions for action and the political (such as those threats that Arendt detects in modern bureaucracy); instead, they are "inherent in a plurality of agents." From the perspective of forgiveness, these "action internal" risks and predicaments are the most important.

Now, the hope associated with action, and what Arendt calls "the greatness of action," as well as the perils of action, proceed from the same features: that action is spontaneous and unpredictable, "interfer[ing]" and "interrupt[ing]" the familiar, and thus setting a new beginning, and, moreover, that an acting person always "acts into" an incalculable "web of relationships" made

[502] Arendt, 241; italics mine.
[503] Arendt, 190.
[504] Arendt, 236, 241.
[505] Margaret Canovan, "Introduction. The Human Condition," in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), xv.
[506] Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality*, 43.
[507] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 188–192, 195–196, 220–222, 236–237.

up of peers equally capable of acting. As we shall now see, these features of action stem from a combination of what could be summarized as the "natality aspects" and the "plurality aspects" of Arendt's account of the political, which essentially manifest themselves in "the simultaneous presence of freedom and non-sovereignty, of being able to begin something new and of not being able to control or even foretell its consequences."[508]

In Arendt's historical narrative of the various manifestations of "action neglect" (beginning with Plato), the common denominator is an attempt to "tame" action, to make it more predictable and capable of being mastered. Such attempts have, Arendt explains, "always amount[ed] to seeking shelter from action's calamities in an activity where one man, isolated from all others, remains master of his doings from beginning to end."[509] In other words, the aim is "to overcome the condition of non-sovereignty and win an untouchable integrity of the human person."[510] Led astray by this "ideal of uncompromising self-sufficiency and mastership," the basic error lies, Arendt indicates, in "identifying freedom with sovereignty." For Arendt, the ideal of sovereignty *"*is contradictory to the very condition of plurality;" it is a delusion because "[n]o man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth."[511]

Why is action boundless? One of the main reasons is that while action is initiated by an individual, it can only come into being in the presence of others; more precisely, in a public "space of appearance." This means that "the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings."[512] The consequences of action are boundless because

> action acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes. Since action acts upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reaction, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others. Thus action and reaction among men never move in a closed circle and can never be reliably confined to two partners.[513]

In addition to this medium of action, which Arendt calls "the web of relationships," there is a second principal factor behind "the inherent boundlessness of action," namely that action "always

[508] Arendt, 235.
[509] Arendt, 220.
[510] Arendt, 234.
[511] Arendt, 234.
[512] Arendt, 190.
[513] Arendt, 190.

establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries."[514] This is an instance of the aforementioned fact that the "greatness of action" as well as the uncontrollable qualities of action arise from a common source: "The boundlessness of action is only the other side of its tremendous capacity for establishing relationships, that is, its specific productivity."[515]

The boundlessness of action is related to the unpredictability and uncertainty of action, not least because the medium of action—"the web of relationships"—is a common factor behind these "frustrations" and "predicaments" of action. For not only does an acting person "always act unexpectedly;" her act also occurs in this anarchic web of relationships, which dramatically adds to the unpredictability of its outcome. As we have just seen, action does not merely "re-act" but also "acts anew." Therefore, "the process he [the actor] starts is never consummated unequivocally in one single deed or event;" to the contrary, it "can grow while its consequences multiply." To act, then, implies "start[ing] new and unending processes." This "process character of action," as Arendt calls it, is a main reason why "we are never able to foretell with certainty the outcome and end of any action."[516] At the same time, it engenders "an enormous capacity for endurance." That is, even if an action appears fleetingly, the process character of action provides it with "an extraordinary resiliency whose force of persistence and continuity in time is far superior to the stable durability of the solid world of things."[517] Thus, once again, the greatness and the predicament are two sides of the same coin.

4.2.2: Acting and Speaking as Actualization of Natality and Plurality

Along with action, the human capacity for speech is the cornerstone of Arendt's account of the political; together, they provide the foundation of Arendt's political categories, such as freedom, power and empowerment, space of appearance, and the appearance of "who" a person is. Furthermore, the relation between action and speech reflects the relation between natality and plurality: "If action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality, then speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being

[514] Arendt, 190.
[515] Arendt, 190–92.
[516] Arendt, 233.
[517] Arendt, 232–33.

among equals."[518] The latter is what Arendt refers to as "the paradoxical plurality of unique beings," which is related to her distinctive way of linking individuality to intersubjectivity; or, more precisely, to a certain political form of intersubjectivity: individuality—one's self, one's unique identity—appears when acting and speaking with others in a public space.[519] Arendt's account of how human individuality and identity are constituted and disclosed imply that action and speech are closely related; for while the "disclosure of who somebody is, is implicit in both his words and his deeds, […] the affinity between speech and revelation is much closer than that between action and revelation, just as the affinity between action and beginning is closer than that between speech and beginning." Consequently, without "the accompaniment of speech," action would "lose its revelatory character."[520]

Arendt's account of individuation is at once highly indebted to and highly critical of Heidegger. As mentioned in the section on Bultmann, Arendt follows Heidegger in referring to self-appearance as *who* one is, in contradistinction to *what* one is. By the same token, Arendt appropriates Heidegger's authenticity / inauthenticity distinction and his vision of authentic existence as a task to be undertaken, rather than something automatically given merely by virtue of existing. To give an example, in a passage that could just as well have been used to encapsulate Heidegger's account of guilt, Arendt states that "men [must] actualize the sheer passive givenness of their being, not in order to change it but in order to make articulate and call into full existence what otherwise they would have to suffer passively anyhow."[521] Yet, as indicated above, Arendt "intersubjectifies" Heidegger's distinction, thereby decidedly inverting it: whereas Heidegger, as we have seen, associates individuation with being-toward-death, acknowledgement of *Schuld*, and withdrawal from human togetherness (particularly in its public manifestations—compare his "perverse-sounding statement," as Arendt calls it, that "the light of the public obscures [*verdunkelt*] everything"), Arendt links individuation with natality and plurality.[522]

[518] Arendt, 178.
[519] Arendt, 176.
[520] Arendt, 178.
[521] Arendt, 208.
[522] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 9.

4.3: While Acting: Arendt's Outline of and Call for a Political Account of Forgiveness

4.3.1: Forgiving and Promising as the Remedies against the Predicaments of Action

At the height of her depiction of the risks and frustrations of action and its chaotic web of relationships, Arendt raises the question as to "whether the capacity for action does not harbor within itself certain potentialities which enable it to survive the disabilities of non-sovereignty?"[523] Answering in the affirmative, Arendt advances what she up to this point has not mentioned explicitly: the human "power to forgive."[524] Furthermore, unlike in her previous writings, Arendt now presents forgiveness in conjunction with "the faculty to make and keep promises."[525] Like forgiveness, promising is a mode of action that addresses the predicaments of action. Jointly, they constitute "the remedy against the irreversibility and unpredictability of the process started by action."[526] They are complementary and "belong together," Arendt explains, in the sense that where forgiveness addresses the irreversibility of the process that the agent initiated in the past, making promises attends to the uncertainty of the future.[527] Thus, arising "directly out of the will to live together with others in the mode of acting and speaking," the interrelated "faculties of forgiving and making promises" are "like control mechanisms built into the very faculty to start new and unending processes."[528]

Since forgiving and promising are potentialities of action itself, the remedies against the predicaments of action do not "arise out of another and possibly higher faculty."[529] This is unlike the *vita activa's* two other basic forms of activities, labor and work. As we have seen, each of the three basic forms of activities corresponds to, and is rooted in, a basic human condition. In addition, they are ridden with "their own" distinctive predicaments. Arendt describes the relation between labor, work, and action (and their respective predicaments) as an incremental movement: the "redemption," as she calls it, from the predicament of labor comes through work, whereas the redemption from the predicament of work is provided by action and speech. Thus, what "in each of these instances saves man—man qua *animal laborans*, qua *homo faber* […]"—comes from "the outside of each of the respective activities."[530] Following this "redemptive scheme," forgiveness and promising appear as action's "self-redemption:" they relate to the predicaments of action like

[523] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 236.
[524] Arendt, 236.
[525] Arendt, 237.
[526] Arendt, 236.
[527] Arendt, 237.
[528] Arendt, 238, 246.
[529] Arendt, 236.
[530] Arendt, 236.

action relates to the predicament of work, and like work relates to the predicament of labor. This is why the parallel concepts of forgiveness and promising can be characterized as self-referential actions.

Turning to Arendt's concept of forgiveness, it is crucial to bear in mind the features of action and its conceptual interrelations that we discussed above. Setting out to advance a political concept of forgiveness, Arendt not only conceived of forgiveness as a mode of action; she also focused exclusively on forgiveness between acting humans. Because of this exclusiveness, it is important to heed what Arendt leaves out of consideration and what she does not claim (and all the more so since this has given rise to quite a few misunderstandings).[531] Essentially, it means that "non-action" types of interhuman activities lie outside her focus. Hence, all private and non-political forms of intersubjective activities are excluded from consideration. To be sure, this is not to say that Arendt claims forgiveness to be an exclusively political and public phenomenon; only that she contends that forgiveness is *also* of political and public significance. What she sets out to counter, then, is solely the belief that forgiveness—"probably because it was discovered in a religious context and made conditional upon 'love'"—has "always been deemed unrealistic and inadmissible in the public realm," and thus has "never has been taken seriously in politics."[532]

4.3.2: What Forgiveness Does: Arendt's Functional Definition

If Arendt had a passion for making distinctions, it does not quite shine through in her account of forgiveness in *The Human Condition*. Compared to the forgiveness literature, in which it is a common practice to approach the question of what forgiveness is *via negativa*, by clarifying what forgiveness is not, and how it is differentiated from cognate concepts, Arendt's account can seem rather undifferentiated. Although Arendt (briefly) considers how forgiveness relates to punishment and revenge, she is not concerned with differentiating forgiveness from more adjacent concepts, such as reconciliation, condonation, excuse, and pardon. Similarly, as Pagani observes, Arendt does not attend to the question "as to what processes render it [forgiveness] adequate to the task that it must achieve under the rubric of her system. Is it a rational or emotive response? Must the perpetrator feel remorse? Does it attend to feelings of resentment?"[533] Despite the fact that Arendt

[531] As mentioned in the introduction, much of the literature (especially in forgiveness research) does not take Arendt's exclusively political and individuated understanding of action into account. On the other hand, in Arendt scholarship, Arendt has been criticized for linking forgiveness "exclusively to action, plurality, and the public sphere." Schanz, *Handling og Ondskab*, 49.
[532] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 239; Human Condition, 243. "Verzeihen, das im Politischen niemals ernst genommen worden ist, schon weil es in einem religiösen Zusammenhang entdeckt und von 'Liebe' abhängig gemacht wurde, […]."
[533] Pagani, "Quotable Arendt," 152.

explicitly (albeit briefly) dissociates herself from emotive accounts, and that she does not describe forgiveness as a process, Pagani is right, I think, to point out that Arendt shows a remarkable lack of interest in how forgiveness comes about.

Arendt's lack of interest in such questions is to be seen, I propose, in light of her strong emphasis on spontaneity: that forgiveness "acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it.[534] That is, unlike reconciliation, which Arendt, as we have seen, conceives of as an ongoing process, forgiveness is executed momentarily, "in a single act."[535] Further, there is another likely reason why she pays so little attention to questions concerning what it takes for the victim to forgive and whether the perpetrator can (and should) do something to prime forgiveness (say, by making amends or expressing remorse); namely, that her main interest lies in what forgiveness "does," its function and what it brings about in our shared political world. Particularly, she links forgiveness with the *with-world [Mitwelt]*, a term that she, as we have seen, adapts from Heidegger and redefines. Indeed, she insists that forgiveness can "only come into play when the plurality of a with-world is the medium of action."[536]

So, on Arendt's account, what does forgiveness "do"? For one thing, it makes it "possible for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly," which is to say, Arendt explains, that forgiveness releases us "from the consequences of what we have done." This is why Arendt regards forgiveness as "the remedy against the irreversibility […] of the process started by acting;" "[t]he possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility—of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have known, what he was doing."[537]

There are several striking elements in these descriptions of forgiveness. First, forgiveness for Arendt seems to be directed to *the consequences* of action, to the processes that the agent let loose; and, further, the agent did not intend these consequences, nor could she have known that her act would have such unintended consequences. In order to decipher these peculiarities, it is crucial to bear in mind Arendt's characterizations of action; especially, the process character of action and the web of relationships / Mitwelt that action acts into. As discussed above, this is to say that action occurs under the condition of non-sovereignty: "the actor never remains the master of his

[534] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.
[535] Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," 308.
[536] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 233. "[Verzeihen kann] nur ins Spiel kommen, wo die Pluralität einer Mitwelt das Medium des Handelns ist."
[537] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 236, 237, 240.

acts," and he is not able to foretell the consequences of his acts.[538] It is against the backdrop of these "disabilities of non-sovereignty" that we are to understand Arendt's striking claim that forgiveness is directed (only) to unintended and unforeseeable harm.[539] As Arendt explains in the aforementioned 1964 interview with Gaus, when we act and start something new, we "weave our strand into a network of relations. What comes of it we never know. We've all been taught to say: Lord forgive them, for they know not what they do. That is true of all action. Quite simply and concretely true, because one cannot know."[540] For Arendt, the ignorance and non-sovereignty of acting persons provide the grounds for forgiving.[541]

As already indicated, a number of questions arise here: if *trespassing* denotes unintended and even unforeseeable injury, is it not then excusable? Does Arendt's account, in other words, amount to "forgiving the excusable"? Or, to put it in a caricatured way, is it tantamount to saying, "forgive me the unintended and unforeseeable consequences of what I initiated?" Similarly, in what sense, if any, can it be rendered as guilt? And is such a notion of "non-sovereign agency" compatible with accountability and individual responsibility?

Pondering the question of whether action, in Arendt's definition, can be evil, Schanz observes that all the characteristics she ascribes to action (the beginning of something new; human co-existence; the actualization of freedom; etc.) are "positive or at least neutral, while the whole thing is founded on a positive anthropology […]. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that action cannot be evil."[542] In his chain of reasoning, Schanz does not make allowance for Arendt's claims about the "inevitable damages resulting from action" and the potentially "disastrous" consequences of action.[543] Yet even if we do take these into consideration, it seems that action cannot be evil, at least not in any conventional sense, insofar as any damages are unintended, unforeseeable, and even unavoidable. Beyond this, in relating forgiveness to the *consequences* of action, Arendt implies a distinction, if not a division, between action and the consequences of action, between an act initiated by an individual and its ramifications in the web of relationships. In effect, she distantiates the negative sides of action from the agent's initiation, from her beginning something new. This, I contend, allows Arendt to describe the initiation of action as unequivocally positive and desirable,

[538] Arendt, 235.
[539] Arendt, 236.
[540] Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains'," 23.
[541] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239.
[542] Schanz, *Handling og Ondskab*, 98.
[543] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239, 233.

and to maintain, as it were, "the innocence of becoming" [*die Unschuld des Werdens*].[544] Thus, if we supplement Schanz's analysis of what Arendt counts as action (as opposed to what she reckons among other forms of doings) by taking into account the negative consequences of action and Arendt's distinction between action and its consequences, it strengthens the conclusion that action cannot be evil.

It bears mentioning that the unintended consequences of action are not necessarily negative, or equivalent to *trespassing*. Arendt does not equate action's unintended consequences *per se* with the "damages resulting from action:" forgiveness addresses, one could say, the specifically negative portion of the unintended consequences.

4.3.3: The Wrongdoer vs. the Wrong and the Who vs. What Distinction

As briefly mentioned in the section on Bultmann, Arendt (like Bultmann) appropriates the Heideggerian distinction between "who" and "what" in reflecting on forgiveness. Recalling that Arendt adapted this distinction in a highly transformative and decidedly anti-Heideggerian manner, linking authentic personhood with acting and speaking in public, we shall now expand on the role that Arendt, in her account of forgiveness, ascribes to the disclosive character of action and the distinction between *who* and *what* one is.

The first thing to note is that Arendt employs the distinction so as to determine the relation between the wrong and the wrongdoer, the deed and the person: "Forgiving and the relationship it establishes is always an eminently personal (though not necessarily individual or private) affair in which *what* was done is forgiven for the sake of *who* did it."[545] This feature belongs to the most heavily referenced parts of Arendt's account. In the forgiveness literature, it is widely invoked in relation to the argument that the victim does not forgive the wrong, but solely the wrongdoer, a distinction that allows for what is a central concern: to retain that "the wrong was wrong," thereby demarcating forgiveness from condonation.[546] This is also how Arendt's position is construed in the Arendt scholarship. For example, Young-Bruehl states that "in Arendt's view one does not forgive a deed at all, but the doer of a deed, a person."[547] As we will see, in her subsequent writings on forgiveness, Arendt elaborates on her distinction between the deed and its author, in the course of which she begins to advocate a strict isolation of the wrong from the wrongdoer. In terms

[544] This is Nietzsche's wording, quoted by Arendt in *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 170.
[545] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.
[546] As to Arendt's distinction in relation to the forgiveness literature, see Allen Speight, "Arendt and Hegel on the Tragic Nature of Action," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 28, no. 5 (2002): 530.
[547] Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 87.

of *The Human Condition*, however, her position is actually somewhat more nuanced, and her distinction less clear-cut. As we have just seen, she does in fact claim that "what was done [that is, the deed] is forgiven." Hence, rather than wholly separating the wrong from the wrongdoer, Arendt suggests an indirect relation: that the wrong is forgiven for the sake of the wrongdoer; or, to put it another way: if the deed is the direct object, the person is the indirect object, the "dative of forgiveness."

But what, more precisely, are we to make of Arendt's contention that forgiving a wrong ("*what* was done") is prompted by a regard for the person *who* did it? How are we to understand this "mechanism;" how does it work? While Arendt's contention is heavily cited, such questions are not resolved in the literature. Admittedly, Arendt herself does not explain it in any detail either. Nonetheless, it is possible to offer a "minimal clarification" of how the "who vs. what mechanism" comes about in forgiving: a person acts into the "plurality of a with-world;"[548] in this uncontrollable web of relationships, something goes wrong, a mistake occurs: the action fails ("misses the mark," "goes astray"), and so turns out to have damaging consequences. In other words, it leads to *trespassing*. Now, Arendt maintains that "trespasses are also acts in the same sense in which objects that have turned out badly are still products of work. […] [F]orgiveness is a faculty inherent in action itself to correct that which has turned out badly."[549] Notably, this implies that even if an act "missed the mark," the agent—the *trespasser*—did act, and hence disclosed *who* she is. This enables the victim to forgive "*what* was done […] for the sake of *who* did it."[550]

At the center of the argument, then, is not the oft-noted fact that the forgiver discloses *who* she is in her act of forgiving (as with action in general); rather, since forgiveness is directed to "the who" of the trespasser, not the victim, the key issue is how the trespasser discloses her "who." In this regard, we should note a distinctive feature, one that follows from Arendt's tying *trespassing* to action: since "trespasses are also acts," the disclosure of the "who" is not dependent on the trespasser having disclosed who she is prior to acting or, for that matter, in subsequent acts of expiation. Hence, to the extent that Arendt distances the wrong from the wrongdoer, it follows from her distantiation of action from the consequences of action: that she, as we saw, associates *trespassing* not with the initiation of action but rather with the consequences of action, as they develop in the Mitwelt beyond the agent's control. In the forgiveness literature, by comparison, the

[548] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 233. "die Pluralität einer Mitwelt."
[549] Arendt, 236. "Verfehlungen sind auch Taten in dem gleichen Sinne, wie mißratene Gegestände immer noch Produkte des Herstellens sind. […] [D]as Vergeben [ist] eine dem Handeln selbst innewohnende Fähigkeit zur Korrektur des Mißratenen [..]."
[550] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.

reasoning behind the distinction between wrong and wrongdoer is somewhat different: in forgiving the wrongdoer, the victim, it is commonly contended, sees the wrongdoer as more than and different from his wrong. While it may vary, and is often not explained, how this "more than" is taken to come about—whether it, say, comes from weighing up the wrong against the wrongdoer's bearing and way of acting in general; from her "post-wrongdoing" attitude and doings; from an assumption that a human being is always more than her deeds; or from a mixture of these elements—this much is clear: it is not connected to the wrongdoing.

4.3.3.1: A Comparison with Bultmann's Lutheran Appropriation of the Who vs. What Distinction

It is instructive to compare Arendt's employment of Heidegger's "who vs. what" distinction with that of Bultmann, as well as with a certain feature of the forgiveness literature, not least because there is arguably a "Lutheran aura" to the discussion of separating the deed from the person. Or at least, this bears affinity to a principal concern of Lutheran thought: that of separating human deeds from salvation.

As already indicated, a central concern in the forgiveness literature is to retain that "the wrong was wrong," thereby demarcating forgiveness from condonation. This is not least reflected in the aforementioned "standard distinction" between the wrong and the wrongdoer, according to which the victim does not forgive the wrong, but solely the wrongdoer. Forgiving, then, implies that the victim sees the wrongdoer as more than and different from his wrong; and this line of argument allows for preserving a condemnation of the deed, while forgiving its author. In other words, the "more than"—the wrongdoer's identity and personhood—is not somehow indirectly related to the wrong. It was on this point that I identified a peculiar feature in Arendt's account: not only does she link personhood (or "whoness") to acting and speaking; she also implies that the trespasser's personhood is disclosed in his action, even if it is the very same action that turns out to have harmful consequences. To the extent that she distantiates the wrong from its author, it bears repeating, she does so by distantiating the individually initiated act from its consequences and "fate" in the Mitwelt.

The endeavor to retain that "the wrong was wrong" is manifest, too, in a common view regarding the demands on the wrongdoer (a view that David Konstan, in his wide-ranging intellectual history of forgiveness, singles out as "the principal modern acceptation"): that for forgiveness to be considered, it requires "a confession of wrongdoing, evidence of sincere

repentance, and a change of heart or moral perspective—one might almost say moral identity."[551] What is condemned here is not solely the deed: it is also a matter of self-reproach, involving the fact that the wrongdoer disapproves and condemns, as it were, his "old self." The demand, in other words, is one for "self-reform" and moral transformation, not to say conversion; a metamorphosis so profound that some critics have objected that it "creates many problems of personal identity."[552] Now, this constitutes a useful comparative tool for Bultmann's account.

We saw that in reflecting on human-to-human forgiveness, Bultmann employed the Heideggerian distinction in order to argue that forgiveness is independent of whatever the wrongdoer's merits and talents may be. Echoing a Lutheran reading of the old Adam / new Adam typology, as well as a Lutheran criticism of salvation by deeds, Bultmann presented the victim as being in a superior position, and the wrongdoer as wholly at the mercy of the victim. Since "forgiveness cannot rest on any thought of compensation," it is independent of any such thing as expiation. Altogether, the wrongdoer can do nothing to prime forgiveness: "Only one thing can help him [the wrongdoer]—if something new happens," namely that the other forgives him, undeservedly and unexpectedly, "thereby mak[ing] him a new man."[553] Remarkably, Bultmann thus proposes an "identity metamorphosis" too. Yet the decisive difference is that for Bultmann, the endeavors of the wrongdoer do not play a role in the metamorphosis—that would amount to salvation by merits. Instead, Bultmann conceives of it as a unilateral enterprise brought about solely by the victim.

Even though Arendt's stance on Heidegger was generally much more critical and transformative than Bultmann's, we have seen that she followed the path Bultmann had initiated in seeking to develop the unexploited potential of Heidegger's account of Mitsein and to combine this with the distinction that Heidegger had presented in his 1924-25 lectures on Aristotle between teleological forms of actions (*poiesis*) and actions that are ends in themselves (*praxis*). Now, as to Arendt's way of adapting Heidegger's "who vs. what" distinction, her construal of "the what" is within striking distance of Bultmann: on the firm conviction that the "identity of a person, […] the essence of who somebody is," is independent of "the sum total of qualities and shortcomings in the individual," Arendt insists, let it be recalled, that forgiveness is unconcerned with "the what" of a

[551] David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 21.
[552] Joanna North, "Wrongdoing and Forgiveness," *Philosophy* 62, no. 242 (1987): 500. Compare Konstan, *Before Forgiveness,* 159.
[553] Bultmann, *Jesus,* 137–38; Bultmann, "Jesus and the Word."

person, that is, with "qualities which we may admire or of achievements which we may highly esteem."[554] In Bultmann's Lutheran interpretation, however, human activities *per se* reckoned among "the what." Also, following his individualistic conception of faith in terms of the God-self-relation, authentic "whoness" is for Bultmann essentially a matter of the individual's faith. For Arendt, in turn, not all forms of activities reckon among "the what;" on the contrary, she maintains that authentic personhood is actualized by engaging in certain political forms of intersubjective activities.[555] Thus, a principal way in which Arendt's account differs from Bultmann's is that both the *who* and the *what* relate to human doings.

Yet a pressure point becomes visible in Arendt's version of the who vs. what distinction here; for while she generally links "the who" and "the what" with different forms of activities, associating "the what" with activities not related to action, tension arises when it comes to *trespassing*. On the one hand, Arendt implies that the agent of trespassing discloses who he is. On the other hand, however, she refers to trespassing as "*what* was done," and she insists that "qualities and shortcomings," as well as "achievements, failings, and transgressions" count among *what* a person is.[556] This prompts the question of whether Arendt is really suggesting that a trespasser discloses *who* he is in his very *trespassing*? I believe that this tension once again leads us back to her differentiation between the individually initiated act and its consequences as they develop and multiply in the Mitwelt beyond the agent's control; that is, the disclosive character of action is situated in the former, in the agent's initiative. Recalling the "minimal clarification" of how the "who vs. what mechanism" comes about in forgiving, Arendt's line of reasoning can thus be summarized as follows: a person discloses who she is by acting into a "plurality of a with-world;"[557] in this chaotic multiplicity of agents and web of relations, her act unexpectedly turns out to have damaging consequences: it leads to *trespassing*.

[554] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 193.
[555] As we will see, while she does not regard this as the only form of "identity disclosive intersubjectivity," she is concerned above all with a certain political form of intersubjectivity; that is, in her technical term, with action.
[556] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241–42.
[557] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 233. "die Pluralität einer Mitwelt."

4.3.4: Love vs. Respect as the Basis for Forgiveness in Politics

4.3.4.1: Love vs. Neighbor Love

In setting out to counter the claim that forgiveness has "never has been taken seriously in politics," a key task for Arendt was to contest what she suggested to be the underlying misassumptions: that forgiveness is of an "exclusively religious nature" and that "only love can forgive."[558] With reference to her (somewhat dubious) nomination of Jesus as "the discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs," she traces these misassumptions back to "the religious context" and "the connection with love" that attended Jesus' discovery.[559] Among the insights that Arendt ascribes to Jesus is that forgiving is "an eminently personal" affair in which, to repeat, "*what* was done is forgiven for the sake of *who* did it." On this point, however, Arendt challenges (what she identifies as) Jesus' view on interhuman forgiveness: that he made the personal element "conditional upon 'love'."[560] But what kind or conception of 'love' is it that she is referring to, and why does she deem it "contraindicated" in politics? And further: what "replaces" love in forgiveness as a political experience, and how does Arendt's position in *The Human Condition* compare to her previous reflections on love and her aforesaid contention in 1953 that "[d]as eigentlich politische Prinzip der christlichen Liebe liegt im Verzeihen"?[561]

In exploring these questions, the first thing to note is that Arendt did not merely change her mind on how, or if, love and love-motivated forgiveness relate to politics and plurality; she also altered her conception of love. To wit, what she rejects in *The Human Condition* is not simply identical to what she subscribed to before. Moreover, while Arendt faults Christianity for assuming that "only love can forgive," it is in fact not, I contend, on the grounds of criticizing Christian notions of love that she comes to argue that forgiveness in politics cannot be constituted by love. In this regard, we should keep in mind, too, that Arendt differentiates between Christianity and the teachings of Jesus.

In order to approach these questions, it is useful to summarize what we have established so far regarding Arendt's reflections on love. At the outset of her carrier, Arendt engaged intensively with Christian theological and philosophical notions of love. In her dissertation, she pondered the question of whether Augustine's conception(s) of love could allow

[558] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239, 242. The following survey of Arendt's thinking on love is indebted to Tömmel, *Wille und Passion*.
[559] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 238, 243.
[560] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 239: "von 'Liebe' Abhängig gemacht."
[561] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 376 (June 1953): "The real political principle of Christian love lies in forgiveness."

for and underpin "the relevance of the other" and a common human community. [562] Her negative conclusion was that Augustine's other-worldly orientation precluded genuine "worldly commitment" and appreciation of other humans in their individualities. By the same token, one's relations to other humans (and to oneself, for that matter) are instrumentalized: the neighbor is not loved for her own sake, but as a mere occasion. Hence, Arendt's verdict is that on Augustine's account, love makes no distinctions: it shows no regard for the person, no receptiveness to *who* she is; to the contrary, it de-individualizes. As Arendt put it in even starker terms in a 1950 entry to her *Denktagebuch*: "Der Irrweg: In einem Menschen das Allgemeine lieben, ihn zu einem 'Gefäss' zu machen, es liegt so nahe, weil immer das Sinnliche als 'Übersinnliche' deutend missverstehen—und ist doch fast potentieller Mord: wie Menschenopfer."[563] Furthermore, as we have seen, in her postdoctoral studies of Rilke and Varnhagen, Arendt continued her criticism of occidental (mis)conceptions of love, her main target now being romanticism and the modern "mania for introspection."[564] Whereas her charge against Augustine had been that his "other-worldliness" deprived humans of their singularity, she now accused the romantics of worldlessness, a flight from the common world into the self, which she diagnosed to be no less devaluating and obstructive to human relationality and community.

The thrust of Arendt's early discussions of love was thus clearly negative and polemic; yet in her mature work, beginning with the *Denktagebuch* in the early 1950s, she begins to reflect more positively on love, and on the implications of the fact that love is wholly receptive to, and directed to, another person in his singularity. As we have seen, on this assumption regarding love's eminent receptiveness, Arendt, in a 1951 entry, expressed approval of the saying that only love can forgive. It was in this context that she introduced her distinction between the person and the deed: "Nur denen, die geliebt werden, kann (und darf) man vergeben; *nicht* das Unrecht, das ich getan haben, sondern nur *mir*, der geliebt wird."[565] However, in this entry Arendt was not primarily concerned with personhood and individuation (in contradistinction to "[i]n einem Menschen das Allgemeine [zu] lieben"); rather, she used the distinction to make a case for human interrelatedness, as against the subjective isolation that stemmed, in her analysis, from modern inwardness and its

[562] Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff*, 24. Copy A, 242.
[563] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 15 (July 1950). "The wrong approach: to love in a person that which is general, to make him a 'receptacle', we are so inclined to do this because we always misinterpret the sensual or sensory as 'extrasensory'—and yet it is almost potential murder: like human sacrifices."
[564] Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 1958, 91.
[565] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 110 (July 1951). "Only those who are loved can (and may) be forgiven; not the wrong that I have done, but only me, who is loved."

fixation with sentiments [*Gefühle*].[566] The drift of this entry was, as it were, to "break through" into these solipsistic subjects encased in themselves. Pursuing this line of argument, Arendt two years later made the claim that "[d]as eigentlich politische Prinzip der christlichen Liebe liegt im Verzeihen."[567] Her reasoning was, accordingly, that forgiveness cannot "in die Seele des Einzelnen verlegt werden, dafür bedarf es ein stets einen Anderen."[568] Thus, she arrived at the rather surprising—in view of her earlier criticism of Christianity as unworldly—conclusion that "[i]n diesem Sinne hat das Christentum wirklich mit der Pluralität der Menschen ernst gemacht."[569]

Not only is this surprising in view of Arendt's criticism of Christianity; it is also markedly different from her famous depiction in *The Human Condition* of the unworldly and even anti-political character of love. At the same time, however, in her entries from the early- and mid-1950s, Arendt developed such a vision of "der absoluten Welt(=Raum)losigkeit der Liebenden," as she put it in an entry of 1955.[570] She did so by pondering further love's receptiveness and directedness to a singular other. Accordingly, whereas she in her early works had faulted traditional conceptions of for obscuring, as it were, the phenomenology of interhuman love, she comes now to consider unworldly and anti-political elements not merely as parasitic on misconceptions of love, but also as inherent in the phenomenon itself. By virtue of being directed to another person as she is in her individuality, love discriminates and singles out. That is, it does not bond equally with a plurality of agents; running counter to the political fundamentals of plurality, equality, and a shared world, love constitutes a domain of inequality and exclusiveness. At its most exclusive, being wholly absorbed in one other person, love is "pure passion," as Arendt puts it in a 1952 entry—and it is this form of I-Thou relationship that she deals with in the section in *The Human Condition* on love's bearing on forgiveness and politics.

Here, Arendt's famous contention is that "[l]ove, by its very nature, is unworldly" and therefore "not only apolitical but antipolitical." Because of its passionate nature, that is, love "destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others."[571] More specifically, love destroys (or sets the lovers apart from) the Mitwelt. This is particularly apparent in the German

[566] Recall that Arendt maintained that in saying that only love forgives, one tends to forget the relational nature of forgiveness, "because one forgets that love, if it is taken to be a "feeling," exists only as a mutual feeling." As to personhood and relationality, Arendt begins (as mentioned) to see them as interdependent.
[567] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 376 (June 1953): "[t]he real political principle of Christian love lies in forgiveness."
[568] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 376: "be located in the soul of the individual—there is always need for another person."
[569] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 376: "[i]n this way, Christianity really took the plurality of men seriously."
[570] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 372 (May 1953): "the absolute world(=space)lessness [or unworld(=space)liness] of lovers."
[571] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 242.

version, which is more elaborate on this point. Expressing herself in more dramatic language, Arendt states that "[i]n der Leidenschaft, mit der die Liebe nur das Wer des Anderen ergreift, geht der weltliche Zwischenraum [...] in Flammen aus. Was die Liebenden von der Mitwelt trennt, ist, daß sie weltlos sind, daß die Welt zwischen den Liebenden verbrannt ist."[572] As the quote indicates, love's world-destroying character follows from its exclusive directedness to "the who" of the beloved. Being immediate and unmediated, love, by the same token, "is unconcerned to the point of total unworldliness with *what* the loved person may."[573] Again, Arendt is more elaborate in *Vita Activa*, adding that: "Das heißt aber, daß der Scharfblick der Liebe gegen alle die Aspekte und Qualitäten abblendet, denen wir unsere Stellung und unseren Stand in der Welt verdanken, daß sie das, was sonst mitgesehen wird, in einer aus allen weltlichen Bezügen herausgelösten Reinheit erblickt."[574]

Thus, whereas Arendt had previously indicated that Augustine's otherworldly and de-individualizing misinterpretation of love amounted to a desertion of the shared human world (while detecting similar outcomes in modern romanticism), she now argues that love, by nature, implies a withdrawal from the common world. Love, then, is an exclusively private phenomenon; indeed, Arendt insists that love is "extinguished the moment it is displayed in public. […] Because of its inherent worldlessness, it can only become false or perverted when it is used for political purposes such as the change or salvation of the world."[575]

But whereas a political action cannot be an act of love, forgiveness can. In fact, love has an unparalleled—or even unlimited—capacity for forgiveness, one that follows from what, in Arendt's analysis, has given rise to the conviction that only love can forgive: namely, that only love is completely and unqualifiedly directed to the *who*. That is, the scope of forgiveness is causally related to (the degree of) "*who* receptiveness" and "*what* unconcernedness": it is by virtue of being "fully receptive to who somebody is" and "unconcerned to the point of total unworldliness with what the loved person may be" that love extends forgiveness "to the point of being always willing to forgive him [the beloved] whatever he may have done."[576]

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[572] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 237. "In the passion with which love apprehends only the who of the other, it is as if the worldly in-between [...] goes up in flames. What separates the lovers from the with-world is the fact that they are worldless, that the world between the lovers is burnt down."
[573] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 242.
[574] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 237. "But this means that the clear vision of love dims our perception of all the aspects and qualities to which we owe our position and our standing in the world, that it sees everything that is otherwise perceived only indirectly in a clarity independent of all worldly relations."
[575] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 51–52.
[576] Arendt, 242–43.

That Arendt rules out love is thus solely down to the fact that she takes it to be incompatible with politics, not with forgiveness—hence her remark that forgiveness would have been "altogether outside" her political considerations if "it were true, as Christianity assumed, that only love can forgive."[577] As to her reference to Christianity, however, it is misleading and hard to reconcile with her construal of Christian love. As we have just seen, Arendt suggests that the reason why Christianity links forgiveness exclusively with love is that "only love is fully receptive to *who* somebody is;" yet her accusation of Christian love is quite the contrary: that it de-individualizes, thereby obscuring the phenomenon of interhuman love. "The trouble with charity," she states, is that it "makes no distinctions, has no regard for the person." [578] Therefore, when Arendt argues that Christianity assumed that "only love can forgive […] because only love is fully receptive to *who* somebody is," this is not predicated on her construal of a Christian concept of love, but rather on her own account of love as passion. Beyond this, I would like to single out another point of tension, this time pertaining to the relation between Arendt's interpretation of love-motivated forgiveness and political forgiveness: on the one hand, she presents Jesus as a proponent of a circumscribed, political concept of forgiveness, while at the same time, she states that Jesus linked forgiveness with love. These tensions may be seen as frictions between her different lines of thought: her phenomenology of love as "pure passion;" her criticism of Christianity; and her endeavor to dissociate Jesus from that criticism and to invoke him in support of her project.

4.3.4.2: Respect, "Political Friendship," and Common Humanity

Let us now turn to what is a new element in Arendt's account of forgiveness, one that she introduces in order to challenge the conviction that forgiveness is of relevance solely in religious and private contexts: her claim that respect is paradigmatic of forgiveness in politics. As she puts it in a frequently cited phrase, "what love is in its own, narrowly circumscribed sphere, respect is in the larger domain of human affairs."[579] At first glance, her argument is straightforward: since respect "concerns only the person, [it] is quite sufficient to prompt forgiving of what a person did, for the sake of the person."[580] Being directed to the "who," respect is independent of the person's merits and qualities. In this regard, respect is perfectly similar to love. What makes respect

[577] Arendt, 242–43.
[578] Arendt, "Lettter to Auden (14 February 1960)." In the next chapter, we return to Arendt's discussion with Auden. In that connection, I will also consider that Arendt's stance on neighbor-love in *Human Condition* is different from that in her dissertation. In short, she changes her mind on neighbor-love.
[579] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 243.
[580] Arendt, 243.

politically relevant, however, is that it is not exclusively directed to one person, nor is it wholly unconcerned with "*what* related" circumstances. Respect-constituted forgiveness, that is, does not destroy the worldly in-between or defy publicness. "Respect, not unlike the Aristotelian *philia politikê*, is a kind of 'friendship' without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us."[581]

This passage has led to the widespread view that Arendt associates forgiveness with friendship between political actors. It is not for nothing, however, that Arendt puts friendship in inverted commas: her use of the term is idiosyncratic, first and foremost because the political "friendship" she advocates is not selective or based on knowing one another. Although she does not make this explicit, we can discern it from her allusion to Aristotle; for, in Aristotle's account of political friendship, "citizens experience friendship for each other in that they wish each other well for their own sake, do things for others *even though they do not know each other*, and aim at the common good."[582] Now, I would like to suggest that this aspect of Arendt's account of forgiveness can be illuminated by a 1954 lecture manuscript, in which she presents an interpretation of Aristotle, including his notion of political friendship. This is important because it pertains to the tension between preferential I-Thou relations and Arendt's notion of plurality and political equality—and hence to the question of whether her account of forgiveness is actually political.

Whereas Arendt in *The Human Condition* mentions Aristotle's notion of *philia politikê* only in passing and in a somewhat esoteric manner, not spelling out its full import, her reading of it is more developed in the 1954 lecture manuscript. Indeed, this manuscript is especially illuminating for Arendt's understanding of political equality. For Aristotle, Arendt notes, "a community is not made out of equals, but on the contrary of people who are different and unequal. The community comes into being through equalizing, *isasthénai*. This equalization takes place in all exchanges, as between the physician and the farmer, and it is based on money." Now, Arendt points out, "[t]he political, noneconomic equalization is friendship, *philia*. […] The equalization in friendship means of course not [sic.] that the friends become equal, but that they become equal partners in a common world."[583]

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[581] Arendt, 243.

[582] As summarized by the Aristotle scholar M. Jang (not as a comment on Arendt) in his "Aristotle's Political Friendship (Politike Philia) as Solidarity," in *Aristotle on Emotions in Law and Politics*, ed. Liesbeth Huppes-Cluysenaer and Nuno M.M.S Coelho, (Springer, 2018), 418; italics added.

[583] Hannah Arendt, "Philosophy and Politics: the Problem of Action and Thought after the French Revolution" (Notre Dame University, March 1954); rpr. in Hannah Arendt, *The Modern Challenge to Tradition: Fragmente eines Buchs*, ed. Barbara Hahn et al., vol. 6, Hannah Arendt: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2018), 544.

This passage of the lecture manuscript indicates that Arendt's passing remark on political friendship is to be read in connection with a previous section in *The Human Condition*, namely her account of political equality; for, in this section, even if she does not explicitly refer to "political friendship," she invokes the same passages of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> the togetherness prevailing in political or commercial communities, which—to take the Aristotelian example—consist not of an association […] between two physicians, but between a physician and a farmer, and 'in general between people who are different and unequal'." The equality attending the public realm is necessarily an equality of unequals who stand in need of being 'equalized' in certain respects and for specific purposes. As such, the equalizing factor arises not from human 'nature' but from outside, just as money—to continue the Aristotelian example—is needed as an outside factor to equate the unequal activities of physician and farmer.[584]

Arendt is at pains to distinguish this equalizing, this "artificially" established political freedom, from "natural equality," or what she refers to as "sameness." Echoing her remarks in the opening entry of the *Denktagebuch*, she asserts that political equality is "the very opposite of our equality before death," or of "equality before God, at least in its Christian interpretation, where we are confronted with an equality of sinfulness inherent in human nature." This "sameness," Arendt continues, can only be experienced in isolation and "utter loneliness, where no true communication, let alone association and community, is possible." Disregarding worldly differentiating and individualizing factors, "everything attesting to sameness are non-worldly, antipolitical, truly transcendent experiences."[585]

Notably, the Aristotelian conception of political friendship that Arendt invokes in her claim regarding the political significance of forgiveness is distinct from her reflections on friendship in general. As we have already seen, in the 1954 conference paper "Concern with Politics in Recent European Thought," Arendt associated friendship with I-Thou relations. Recall also that she did so in contradistinction to plural political relations, insisting that dialogical I-Thou relations cannot be paradigmatic for the political realm, since "plurality is by far not explored when an I-Thou relationship has been established."[586] In her other writings (above all her 1959 honorary address on G. E. Lessing), Arendt considers the possible political implications of friendship. Nota

[584] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 214–15.
[585] Arendt, 215.
[586] Hannah Arendt, "Concern with Politics in Recent European Political Thought" (American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1954); rpr. in Hannah Arendt, "Concern with Politics in Recent European Political Thought," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 445.

bene, her point of departure here is not a technical, Aristotelian conception of political friendship; rather, she deals with friendship in more familiar terms, compatible with everyday language—and in so doing, reflects on its political relevance. Thus, she describes friendship as selective and preferential, and as based on knowing one another. In fact, she stresses that friendship comes into being only when built over time: "eine zwei Woche alte Freundschaft existiert nicht."[587] Moreover, while not necessarily confined to a relation between two persons, friendship is restricted to a limited number of people, a circle of friends.

Constituted by direct personal relations, friendship is thus—like love, but unlike *philia politikê*—associated with intimacy and partiality; yet—unlike love, but like *philia politikê*—friendship is not tantamount to a symbiotic breakdown of the worldly in-between. With reference to Lessing, Arendt suggests that friendship becomes politically relevant insofar as the friends, along with private matters, discuss general political matters pertaining to the common world. In her account of the political import of friendship, she pays great attention to speech and exchange of opinions: friendship, she suggests, is of political importance to the extent that discussions with friends bring about different perspectives on common issues, thereby cultivating the ability to consider things from other people's points of view; that is, a Kantian "enlarged mentality," which Arendt regards as a cardinal political virtue. On that account, friendship introduces to the public and political realm the "humanness" that persons take precedence over principles. Arendt's identification of a political significance of friendship does not, however, change what is the main thing to note from our perspective: that this political import does not follow from an equalization or a lifting of the exclusive and discriminating quality of friendship.

Returning to the political friendship that Arendt refers to in her reflections on forgiveness, the question is, however, whether this provides for a non-exclusive and non-discriminating concept of forgiveness. Although she invokes Aristotle's *philia politikê*, stressing its attendant equalization, and construing it as a form of respect extending to all humans simply qua their being human, her account of forgiveness based on such political friendship and respect does in fact, as I will seek to show, convey inequality and exclusiveness. This pertains to the question of whether her concept of forgiveness conforms to her distinctive account of political intersubjectivity, alias actualized plurality. Is it, in other words, a plurality or an I-Thou form of intersubjectivity?

As indicated in the introduction, I see this as a point of tension in Arendt's account.

[587] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 51 (December 1950): "a two weeks old friendship does not exist."

On the one hand, as Leif Pullich has (briefly, but importantly) remarked, forgiveness is an exception within Arendt's account of plurality: whereas an agent acts into a plurality, forgiveness is directed to one other person.[588] To supply Pullich's observation with an example, Arendt tellingly speaks of "the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven."[589] Plurality, we should recall, cannot be confined to a bilateral relation, whereas "the personal encounter of I and Thou," in Arendt's view, "contains less specifically political experience than almost any relationship in our average everyday lives."[590] Forgiveness, therefore, seems to introduce an apolitical form of intersubjectivity into Arendt's account of political intersubjectivity. However, rather than simply labeling Arendt's account of forgiveness an (inadvertent) I–Thou relation, my contention is that it can more accurately be characterized as representing a tension between a "traditional" I-Thou form of intersubjectivity and Arendt's distinctive version of political intersubjectivity. This is because there are in fact elements of plurality attached to it, which means that it does not fit easily with I-Thou relations either.

First and foremost, the tension is manifest in the peculiar fact that if forgiveness is confined to a bilateral relation, the addressee of forgiveness, *trespassing*, is distinctively "plurality derived." As I will elaborate on below, *trespassing* is not least associated with the "plurality-generated" condition of non-sovereignty. At the same time, non-sovereignty serves for Arendt as the reason for forgiveness: "The reason for the insistence on a duty to forgive is clearly 'for they know not what they do;'" that is, when acting, human are not "able to control or even foretell its consequences."[591] Forgiveness is needed, then, because *trespassing* is "in the very nature of action's constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relations."[592] Moreover, these traits of plurality occasionally "find their way" into Arendt's definitions of forgiveness. For example, she states that forgiveness means "constantly releasing [acting] men from what they have done unknowingly;" it is the "constant mutual release from what they do."[593] Furthermore, at one point in *Vita Activa*, she speaks of the "Mitwelt that forgives us our debts [*Schuld*]," thus indicating that "the plurality of a Mitwelt" generates not only *trespassing* but also forgiveness itself.[594]

[588] Pullich, "Hannah Arendt Über Das Verzeihen," 10.
[589] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.
[590] Arendt, "Concern with Politics," 443.
[591] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239, 235.
[592] Arendt, 240.
[593] Arendt, 240.
[594] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 238, 233: "Mitwelt, die unsere Schuld vergibt;" "die Pluralität einer Mitwelt ."

4.3.5: Extraordinary Forgiveness, Common Misdeeds: the Ambivalence of Arendt's Account

Famously (and questionably) Arendt claimed that Jesus "discovered the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs."[595] Here, we shall not go deeper into that;[596] instead we shall focus on the focus on the distinction between *trespassing* and *offense* that Arendt ascribes to Jesus. Whereas Jesus is commonly associated with an unlimited power of forgiveness, "Arendt's Jesus" is a proponent of a limited and confined concept of forgiveness, hence placing much under the category of the unforgivable. Thus, Arendt stresses that Jesus' "command to forgive is not unconditional" and that there are perpetrators whom it is "beyond the power to forgive."[597] More precisely, it is Arendt's claim that Jesus distinguished between *trespassing* and *offense*. The former is transgressions that "we are confronted with daily and with which we know how to come to terms or how to get rid of," since Jesus teaches us that we "are supposed to forgive [the agents of trespassing] 'seven times a day'"[598] *Trespassing* is Arendt's translation of the New Testament Greek term *hamartanein*. It means, notes Arendt, "rather 'to miss,' 'fail and go astray,' than 'to sin'."[599] It is key to Arendt's interpretation, as these etymological comments indicate, that trespassing denotes unintended harm or, in other words, unwanted and unforeseen consequences of one's actions. Accordingly, the reason for Jesus' "insistence on a duty to forgive [humans who have trespassed] is clearly 'for they know not what they do'," Arendt reasons, quoting the words that Luke ascribes to Jesus on the cross.[600] Notably, however, this duty applies only to *trespassing*. Indeed, Arendt goes as far as to state that agents of trespassing not only did not know that their acts would have harmful consequences, but also could not have known it and even could not have avoided it.[601] The concept of forgiveness that correlates with trespassing, consequently, has more in common with what is usually categorized as excuse than with forgiveness. The point here, however, is not to enter into conceptual analysis on the relationship between forgiveness and excuse, but merely to draw attention to the fact that the notion of forgiveness that Arendt finds in Jesus' teaching is highly circumscribed.

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[595] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 238.
[596] I have done that elsewhere: Wittendorff, "A Post-Holocaust Philosopher of Forgiveness: An Exploration of Hannah Arendt's Jesus." In the following, I draw on this article.
[597] Arendt, "Letter to Auden (14 February 1960)."
[598] Hannah Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 109; compare Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239; Luke 17:4.
[599] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 240.
[600] Arendt, 239. See also Hannah Arendt, "Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought," The Hannah Arendt Papers at the Library of Congress, Essays and lectures, Christian Gauss Seminar in Criticism, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., Second draft, Part II, 1953, p. 18 (Series: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975, n.d.).
[601] Arendt, 237, 239.

Most striking is it that evil is excluded from this concept of forgiveness— notably, not merely extreme forms of evil, but all kinds of deliberate wrongdoing, or what Arendt calls "willed evil."[602] Arendt terms these deeds *offenses,* which is her translation of the New Testament Greek word *skandala*.[603] A *skandalon,* observes Arendt, "originally meant a trap laid for one's enemies and [...] is used as the equivalent for the Hebrew word *mikhshol* or *zur mikhshol* which means 'stumbling block.'"[604] An offense, accordingly, is like a stumbling block which "cannot be removed from our path;" it is something which it is "not in our power to repair," an "unsurmountable obstacle." However, not only is it something that "human powers cannot remove;" it cannot be forgiven by God either.[605] "[A]ccording to Jesus," Arendt advances, perpetrators of deliberate evil "will be taken care of by God in the Last Judgment;" and as Arendt emphasizes (with reference to the statement in Matt 16:27 that everyone will be repaid or rewarded in keeping with their deeds), "the Last Judgment is not characterized by forgiveness, but by just retribution."[606] Arendt here points to the tension in the New Testament between the notion of God's grace and forgiveness on one hand and of God's judgment on the other. Furthermore, Arendt insists that the Last Judgment "plays no role whatsoever in life on earth." If someone has committed an offense in "life on earth," the conclusion is severe: "we can indeed only repeat with Jesus: 'It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea'."[607] This is due to the fact that, when confronted with an offense, "all we can say is: This should never have happened.[608]" The agent of an offense is, "to take another of Jesus' metaphors," Arendt adds, "like the weed, 'the tares in the field,' with which one can't do anything except destroy them, burn them in the fire."[609]

Now, that extermination should be the attitude toward agents of all sorts of willed evil appears to be exaggerated and out of proportion. Similarly, it is questionable whether intentional wrongdoing is as "rare" as Arendt assumes,[610] since it includes not only extreme evil but also, as it were, "minor deliberate wrongdoing." There are clear indications that what Arendt had in mind was solely the former; more specifically, genocide and totalitarian crimes against humanity. Thus,

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[602] Arendt, 240.
[603] Arendt, 240; Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 109.
[604] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 125, 109f; see also Arendt, *Human Condition,* 240.
[605] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 125.
[606] Arendt, *Human Condition,* 240.
[607] Arendt, 241.
[608] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 75, 109.
[609] Arendt, 125; compare Matt. 13:24ff.
[610] Arendt, *Human Condition,* 240.

in her description of what she takes to be Jesus' notion of *scandala,* she uses several of the same formulations as she does in her characterization of totalitarianism. For instance, the sentence "this should never have happened" is key to her description of the Holocaust: "One had had the idea that everything in one way or another could be remedied. Not this. This should never have happened [*Dies hätte nie geschehen dürfen*]."[611] Another example is that Arendt states that the agent of an offense is "an offender to the world order as such."[612] Additionally, Arendt points out the political and societal aspects of offenses, as she maintains that Jesus with his notion of *skandala* "stressed [...] the harm done to the community, the danger arising to all."[613] All this indicates that what Arendt really had in mind with offenses was totalitarian crimes, not all sorts of deliberate wrongdoing.

Moreover, Arendt contends that "Jesus' distinction" between trespassing and offense indicates more than the traditional Catholic distinction between venial and mortal sins; it "indicates that these stumbling blocks [*scandala*] cannot be removed."[614] Arendt does not explicate in what way, more precisely, it indicates more; but probably it is due to the fact that in the case of the so-called mortal sins, there are in fact prescripts of how to deal with them and how to get on. An offense is, as it were, more mortal than a mortal sin.

The conception of forgiveness which Arendt identifies in the teachings of Jesus thus appears to be very limited in scope. This has led Sigrid Weigel to contend that Arendt subjects forgiveness to a "normalization." The normalization is, according to Weigel, linked to secularization: unlike "a religious connotation," argues Weigel, Arendt holds that forgiveness "occurs in […] 'the common world.'" Weigel also asserts that Arendt is "concerned with its anchoring in everyday action, resulting in the secularization of forgiveness."[615] Moreover, while it is clear that it can be characterized as a normalization, this characterization captures in fact only one side of Arendt's conception. The qualities which Arendt's Jesus discovered in forgiveness can by no means be designated as a normalization, but are rather the opposite. Hence, Arendt praises "the freedom contained in Jesus' teaching of forgiveness" which implies that humans "can be

[611] Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains," 59.
[612] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 125; see also Arendt, *Human Condition,* 241.
[613] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 126.
[614] Arendt, 109.
[615] Weigel, "Secularization and Sacralization, Normalization and Rupture: Kristeva and Arendt on Forgiveness," 320–21. It is not quite clear, however, why this is unlike "a religious connotation." Do religious interpretations, in other words, rule out that forgiveness can occur in the common world and in everyday life? Does that not depend on the type of religion?

trusted with so great a power as that to begin something new" and she even terms forgiveness a "miracle."[616] This seems paradoxical. If forgiveness has such extraordinary qualities, why does it not possess a greater forgiveness potentiality? There appears to a discrepancy between Arendt's description of what forgiveness addresses and the extraordinary qualities she ascribes to forgiveness?[617]

4.4: Guilt and Plurality: Arendt's Concept of *Trespassing* as a Political-Intersubjective Transformation of Heidegger's Account of *Schuld*

The question as to what role, if any, ethics play in Arendt's conception of political action counts among the most disputed issues in the literature. Objecting to her so-called agonism, many commentators (especially those associated with critical theory) have worried about her lacking "moral foundations."[618] In recent years, however, concurrent with the interdisciplinary turn to relationality, another line of interpretation has gained favor, one that reads Arendt as an exponent of an intrinsic ethics of political relationality. By "intrinsic" is meant that this does not arise from something outside of the realm of human affairs, or, more precisely, outside of a plurality of agents. To put it another way, rather than applying "external" principles to political action, the source of morality is ontologically rooted in plurality itself: it is, as MacLachlan has it, "an ethic of plurality."[619]

Now, in identifying a built-in morality in Arendt's account of the political, the proponents of this line of interpretation refer to some far-reaching but undeniably sketchy remarks that Arendt makes in the chapters on forgiveness and promising. As we have seen, she understands these interrelated faculties as a sort of self-referential actions that mitigate predicaments inherent in action itself. In this connection, she speaks of a "moral code" that can be "inferred from" these faculties: since they "correspond so closely to the human condition of plurality," they establish a

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[616] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241, 240, 246.

[617] This contrast in Arendt's conceptualization between the quality and addressee of forgiveness has Schanz to raise a diametrically opposite point of criticism against Arendt: that she excludes the banal and familiar from forgiveness, thus neglecting that forgiveness is not always of a "deep, existential kind." These opposite points of criticism can be explained by the fact that whereas Weigel is concerned solely with what forgiveness addresses, Schanz does not take this question into account, but focuses merely on the qualities that Arendt ascribes to forgiveness. Schanz, *Handling og ondskab*, 50.

[618] Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," *Political Theory* 16, no. 1 (1988): 29–51.

[619] MacLachlan, "An Ethic of Plurality."

"set of guiding principles" in politics. This, Arendt hints, constitutes a universal ontological ground for an "ethics of plurality:"

> In so far as morality is more than the sum total of *mores*, of customs and standards of behavior solidified through tradition and valid on the ground of agreements, both of which change with time, it has, at least politically, no more to support itself than the good will to counter the enormous risks of action by readiness to forgive and to be forgiven, to make promises and to keep them. These moral precepts are the only ones that are not applied to action from the outside, from some supposedly higher faculty or from experiences outside action's own reach. They arise, on the contrary, directly out of the will to live together with others in the mode of acting and speaking, and thus they are like control mechanisms built into the very faculty to start new and unending processes.[620]

While Arendt here speaks of "moral prescripts," she says very little about the content of these prescripts, or what is morally demanded (apart from "readiness to forgive and to be forgiven, to make promises and to keep them," and "the will to live together with others in the mode of acting and speaking"). What she traces out, then, is indeed a "minimal morality," as Williams puts it;[621] or perhaps it could more precisely be characterized—along the lines of the interpretation proposed by Loidolt—as a political-phenomenological ethic, that is, an ethic that is "not applied to [political] action from the outside," but rather is "built into" it, as Arendt puts in the passage just quoted. Such an ethic of political intersubjectivity is not, in other words, in need of a moral foundation applied "from the outside."

In what follows, my aim is to contribute to the phenomenological line of interpretation that identifies an elementary intrinsic ethics and meta-ethics of political intersubjectivity in *The Human Condition.* More precisely, I propose to do so by inquiring into *trespassing* as following from actualized plurality. Considering further the ethical status of *trespassing* and the extent to which it can be rendered guilt, I ponder the question: if a moral code can be derived from forgiveness, what does this imply for *trespassing* as the correlate of forgiveness? And if *trespassing* is a condition of, and comes into being solely in, the political "in-between," does it then amount to guilt as political ontology or intersubjectivity? As outlined in the introduction, I propose that Arendt appropriates basic features of Heidegger's existential-ontological analysis of *Schuld*, while claiming, in an implied criticism of Heidegger, that these features stem from, and are experienced

[620] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 245–46.
[621] Garrath Williams, "Ethics and Human Relationality: Between Arendt's Accounts of Morality.," *HannahArendt. Net-Journal for Political Thinking* 2007, no. 3 (2007): 5.

in, political intersubjectivity; more specifically, in the "web of human relationships," or what Arendt in *Vita Activa* terms the Mitwelt.

My suggestion takes its cue from an observation that Villa makes in his study of Arendt's transformative appropriation of Heideggerian motifs: "nonsovereignty is phenomenologically most apparent in the 'futility, boundlessness, and unpredictability' of action in the public world. Our thrownness or contingency is highlighted when we initiate actions that change constellations in unforeseeable ways. Groundlessness, then, is concretely encountered in the realm of plurality, not the self." That is, in keeping with what Villa has identified as her general approach to Heideggerian categories—an externalization or "relocation" of them from the self to plurality, along with a shift in focus and priority from mortality and finitude [*Endlichkeit*] to natality and initiation—Arendt reemphasizes "plurality as constitutive of our thrownness."[622] Elaborating on Villa's brief remark, I would like to add that for Arendt, as is the case for Heidegger, non-sovereignty is linked to a peculiar notion of guilt, namely to her notion of *trespassing*.

My contention is thus that Arendt's appropriation essentially pertains to Heidegger's linking guilt to a condition of non-sovereignty. For Heidegger, because "[t]he 'essence' ['Wesen'] of Da-sein lies in its existence," the identity and essence of each person "remains continually dependent on a future" that s/he cannot quite control or forecast;[623] and guilt follows from Dasein's inability to fully "master the circumstances into which it is thrown."[624] For Arendt, the unavoidable *trespassing* of acting humans similarly follows from "disabilities of non-sovereignty": "The actor never remains the master of his acts."[625] Given these conditions of non-sovereignty and contingency, we are to "assume responsibility in the unpredictable [*im Unberechenbare Verantwortung zu übernehmen*]", as Arendt put it in a 1951 entry to the *Denktagebuch*.[626] Further, if the Heideggerian individual, or Dasein, is "thrown into assuming responsibility" for something for which she cannot be morally blamed, much the same applies to the Arendtian actor. Where Heidegger declares his existential-ontological analysis of guilt to be extra-moral, Arendt speaks of the "moral irresponsibility inherent in a plurality of agents," and maintains that *trespassing* "cannot be "judged according to 'moral standards.'"[627] Symptomatically, they both write "guilt" in inverted

[622] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 141. Villa's quotation is from Arendt, *Human Condition*, 195.
[623] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 42; Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology*, 118.
[624] Schalow and Denker, *Historical Dictionary of Heidegger's Philosophy*, 69.
[625] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 235–36.
[626] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 136; September 1951.
[627] 220, 205 Arendt, *Human Condition*.

commas, thereby indicating their departure from guilt as a moral phenomenon (or from conventional assumptions about moral guilt). "[H]e who acts" must, according to Arendt, bear the "burden" that he "never quite knows what he is doing," and as such, he "always becomes 'guilty' of consequences he never intended or even foresaw."[628] So, if the Heideggerian Dasein is inherently guilty, "acting men," for Arendt, "move in a web of error and unavoidable guilt."[629]

Furthermore, Arendt depicts our acting into a turbulent web of relationships in a manner that resembles Heidegger's linking of guilt and non-sovereignty with thrownness. Elaborating on his notion of thrownness, Heidegger speaks of the "entanglement [*Verfängnis*]" and the "ontological concept of motion" that he terms "falling prey [*Verfallenheit*]."[630] This entangling movement lures Dasein into an illusion of self-sufficiency and mastership—into the "tranquillized supposition that it possesses everything, or that everything is within its reach." As a result, Dasein's outlook is "constantly torn away from authenticity and dragged into *das Man,*" which is to say that "the movement of falling prey is characterized by *turbulence* [*Wirbel*]."[631] Claiming that this "turbulence reveals the character of throwing and the movement of thrownness," Heidegger explains that "Dasein remains in the throw [*im Wurf*], and is sucked into the turbulence [*hineingewirbelt*] of *das Man's* inauthenticity." In illustration of the latter, Heidegger states that Dasein is "taken along [*Mitgenommenwerden*] by the no one," the anonymous *das Man*, "and so is entangled [*verstrickt*] in inauthenticity."[632]

Arendt, for her part, proposes that action, "by producing the web of human relationships, seems to entangle its producer;" or, as she puts it in *Vita Activa,* the production of this web takes place in such a way that "everybody who participates in weaving [*mitwebt*] it gets entangled [*verstrickt*] in it." The results of action, Arendt proceeds—and here we should bear in mind that "its specific productivity" is to establish relationships—"fall into a predetermined net of relationships, invariably dragging the agent with them."[633]

Yet the space they "fall into," and into which the agent is entangled in or dragged into, is not associated with inauthenticity; to the contrary, as we have seen, Arendt decisively turns

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[628] Arendt, 233.
[629] Hannah Arendt, "Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought," The Hannah Arendt Papers at the Library of Congress, Essays and lectures, Christian Gauss Seminar in Criticism, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., Second draft, Part II, 1953, p. 18 (Series: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975, n.d.).
[630] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 178, 180.
[631] Heidegger, 178.
[632] Heidegger, 178–80.
[633] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 234. Recall that the "[t]he boundlessness of action is only the other side of its tremendous capacity for establishing relationships, that is, its specific productivity" (p. 190).

Heidegger's authenticity vs. inauthenticity distinction on its head, insisting that authenticity is actualized by participating in, not by withdrawing from, public relationality.

Before considering what Arendt's appropriation of these Heideggerian features means for the nature and ethical status of her notion of *trespassing*, I would like to point out some "Heidegger-polemical" aspects of her chapters on forgiving and promising, suggesting that these provide a telling and vivid example of her "intersubjectification" and politicization of Heideggerian motifs, as well as her "thinking with Heidegger against Heidegger." Most pointedly, this is borne out by a remark that Arendt added in *Vita Activa*. This occurs in connection to her description of an interdependence between plurality and the faculties of forgiving and promising: that these faculties "depend on plurality, on the presence and acting of others," while at the same time the unruly web of actions would not be able "to survive the disabilities of non-sovereignty" and the predicaments of action, were it not for the mitigating function of forgiving and promising. Echoing the concerns about solipsism and the debasement of human relationality and community that she had already expressed in her early writings, Arendt speaks of the "call of the with-world [*Ruf der Mitwelt*]," which summons us out of self-isolation, out of our being "closed within ourselves," to "the presence of others who act-with [mit-handeln] and are-with [mit-sind]."[634] This "call of the with-world," asserts Arendt, "redeems [*erlöst*]" us from being "helplessly surrendered [*ausgeliefert*] to the darkness of the human heart, its ambiguities and contradictions, lost in a labyrinth of solitary moods [*Stimmungen*]."[635]

While Arendt (as usual) does not explicitly refer to Heidegger, the polemic is conspicuous: Heidegger's "call of conscience" has been "replaced" by the "call of the Mitwelt;" and what is more, we should bear in mind the fact that Arendt has effectively redefined the Heideggerian term Mitwelt. As we have seen, she took issue with Heidegger's "ontologically significant" distinction between potential and actual(ized) relationality—between the existential-ontological and the existenti*el*-ontic levels—that is, the distinction that allowed Heidegger to bracket "real others" from his existential analysis. Contesting Heidegger's claim of Dasein's

[634] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 236: "Anwesenheit von Anderen die mit-sind und mit-handeln." Arendt, *Human Condition,* 243.
[635] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 236: "wir wären hilflos der Dunkelheit des menschlichen Herzens, seinen Zweideutigkeiten und Widersprüchen ausgeliefert, verirrt in einem Labyrinth einsamer Stimmungen, aus dem wir nur erlöst werden können durch den Ruf der Mitwelt." Cf. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 237: "we would be condemned to wander helplessly in the darkness of each man's lonely heart, caught in its contradictions and equivocalities—a darkness which only the light shed over the public realm through the presence of others [...] can dispel."

constitutive relationality, Arendt insisted that the Mitwelt depends on the actual "presence and acting of others." It is symptomatic, then, that in advancing "the call of the Mitwelt," Arendt does not speak of Mit*sein*: using active verbs in the plural, she advances instead the "corrective terms" mit-*sind* and mit-*handeln*, thereby indicating the actual presence and interaction of plural others.[636]

As should be evident, the Arendtian call is decidedly opposed to the Heideggerian one: whereas the Heideggerian call "reaches *das Man*-self of heedful Mitsein with others," summoning it away from sociality and the public sphere that obscures and dims [*verdunkelt*][637] everything with its conformity and "idle talk," the Arendtian "call of the Mitwelt" is a call *to* the with-world, to acting and speaking in public, thus pointing the way out of the "labyrinth of solitary moods [*Stimmungen*]."[638] For Arendt, this is at the same time the only way to selfhood ("whoness"): authentic existence and disclosedness can only be actualized in the Mitwelt. This is because for Arendt, self, others, and the shared world are interdependent; and this is essentially what makes Arendt's take on intersubjectivity phenomenological. (Recall that a distinctive feature of a phenomenological account of intersubjectivity is that "the three dimensions self, other, and world belong together, they reciprocally illuminate one another, and can only be fully understood in their interconnection."[639])

Moreover, in her description of being "surrendered [*ausgeliefert*] to the darkness of the human heart, its ambiguities and contradictions, lost in a labyrinth of solitary moods," she polemically employs the Heideggerian terms *Stimmung* (mood or attunement) and *Zweideutigkeit* (ambiguity). In a passage which Arendt has highlighted in her copy of *Sein und Zeit*, and which reads like a meta-text for her description of being surrendered, Heidegger states that the term irresoluteness [*Unentschlossenheit*] denotes the phenomenon of "being-surrendered [*Ausgeliefertsein*] to the way in which things have been prevalently interpreted by *das Man*. Dasein, as a *Man*-self, is 'lived' by the commonsense ambiguity of publicness."[640] By contrast, in the grounding mood or attunement of angst, Dasein affectively and unambiguously encounters its existential indebtedness and groundlessness, along with its finitude and being-unto-death.[641] Note

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[636] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 232.
[637] *Verdunkeln* carries both meanings: to darken and to obscure or conceal.
[638] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 232.
[639] Zahavi, *Phenomenology*, 88.
[640] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 299. This is an "ambiguity of publicness," Heidegger proceeds, "in which no one resolves, but which has always already made its decision."
[641] Resoluteness, then, is "constituted by the attunement of angst;" "attested in Dasein itself by its conscience," it signifies "the angst-prepared [*angstbereite*] projecting oneself upon one's ownmost being-guilty." Further, by "the courage to have angst about death," or what Heidegger terms "anticipatory resoluteness [*vorlaufende*

also that Arendt transposes Heidegger's light metaphor: the public realm does not *verdunkelt*; to the contrary, she speaks of "the darkness of each man's lonely heart," which "only the light shed over the public realm through the presence of others [...] can dispel." That is, Arendt locates ambiguity and *Verdunkelung* in "nonrelated" selves deprived of the commonsense provided by acting and speaking in public.[642]

In addition to these polemics pertaining to Arendt's intersubjectification and politicization of key features in Heidegger's account of existential *Schuld*, a decisive difference between their accounts is the fact that for Heidegger, there is no room for forgiveness, or prospect of redemption: authentic existence "is premised," as Wolfe has put it, "on an unflinching acceptance of the ultimacy of death and the irremovability of guilt."[643] We saw that Heidegger lectured on "The Problem of Sin in Luther" in a 1924 seminar series co-organized with Bultmann, and that more generally he engaged intensively with the issue of sin during this period, leading up to his firm rejection in *Being and Time* of "grace as the appropriate horizon within which to interpret sin" in favor of "a horizon of nothingness."[644] Recall also that this was a main challenge that Bultmann faced in his endeavor to appropriate Heidegger's existential phenomenology for theological and ethical purposes, while maintaining that "[i]f the Christian event that takes place in faith and 'rebirth' is not a magical transformation that lifts the man of faith out of human existence,"[645] then the theologian is able to, and ought to, deal with and come to an understanding of "the existential structures that are," as Wolfe puts it, "receptive to redemption."[646]

What I want to bring up again here pertains to the critical part of Bultmann's engagement with Heidegger; more precisely, to a particular feature in his juxtaposition of Heidegger's "being-onto-death" with Gogarten's "being-toward-the other." It is not least due to Heidegger's focus on Dasein's being-onto-death that his vison of human existence is eschatological,

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Entschlossenheit]," Dasein "is brought before itself as delivered over to its possibility," to "its ownmost nonrelational potentiality-of-being." (Here, we should bear in mind Heidegger's individuated understanding of possibility and death as existentials, and his peculiar definition of *Schuld* as "being the null-ground of a nullity.") For the most part, however, *Stimmungen* do not have this explicit (resolved) and disclosive character—not even angst: to the contrary, publicly and socially mediated, angst generates unresolvedness: it leads to escapism; above all, to an "evasive covering over of death." Heidegger, 296–97, 254, 256; cf. 251–52.

642 Arendt, *Human Condition*, 237.

643 Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, 61.

644 Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology*, 127.

645 Rudolf Bultmann, "Die Geschichtlichkeit Des Daseins Und Der Glaube. Antwort an Gerhardt Kuhlmann," *Zeitschrift Für Theologie Und Kirche* 11, no. 5 (1930): 346; cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Historicity of Man and Faith," in *Existence and Faith: The Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden (London and Glasgow, 1930), 112.

646 Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, 183.

as Wolfe has made clear, insofar as he envisages "the possibility of authentic existence as dependent on a certain (existential) relation to one's future."[647] Yet, as Wolfe also notes, Bultmann's juxtaposition "entails a critique of Heidegger's central term 'possibility.' For ultimately, Bultmann argues, Heidegger's analysis neutralizes this term by disallowing anything genuinely *new* ever to happen to Dasein. Possibility must indeed […] be defined eschatologically: but eschatology must be allowed to retain its irruptive character, its promise of the advent of something new and unanticipated."[648]

The main import of these considerations is that Arendt's emphasis on spontaneity and the human capacity for genuinely new beginnings can be read as a comparable criticism of Heidegger. Notably, Arendt is concerned with redemption too, and she also links this with the irruption of the genuinely new. Unlike Bultmann, however, her perspective is confined to the strictly human and "inner-worldly." In fact, Arendt's perspective is arguably more immanent than Heidegger's, insofar as his account is tantamount to "an eschatology without eschaton," as Wolfe puts it (or what one might also call an eschatology without an eschatological hope). For while Arendt operates with redemption and hope, her perspective is not eschatological; rather, her interest lies in detecting the worldly, inter-human, and political significance of redemption. As we have seen, she proposed a tripartite redemptive scheme, in which she described the relation between labor, work, and action and their respective predicaments as an incremental movement, culminating with her assertion that the "possible redemption" from the predicaments of action is "one of the potentialities of action itself." Forgiving and promising, in other words, are "built into the very faculty to start new […] processes."[649]

Referring to the "melancholy wisdom of *Ecclesiastes*," which "does not necessarily arise from specifically religious experience," Arendt contends that "[w]ithout action to bring into the play of the world the new beginning of which each man is capable […], 'there is no new thing under the sun.'"[650] It would, as it were, all be vanity. With conspicuous, albeit implicit, reference to Heidegger, Arendt speaks of "the law of mortality, which is the most certain and the only reliable law of a life spent between birth and death," advancing that it is "the faculty of action that interferes

[647] Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology*, 118.
[648] Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, 185.
[649] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 236–37, 246.
[650] Arendt, 246. It has been suggested that Arendt transposes Heidegger's *Sein-zum-Tode* with "*Sein-zum-Leben.*" (Schanz 2007, 61). Considering that "life" in Arendt's terminology is connected to the necessity of biological life, it would perhaps have been more poignant to call it "Sein zur Initiation und sum Handle."

with this law because it interrupts the inexorable automatic course of daily life." What alters this bound "life span of man running toward death," then, is "the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin."[651]

Conclusion

Linking up to the exploration in the previous chapters of the development in Arendt's thinking on forgiveness, guilt, and "being-in-the-world-with," this chapter has addressed central questions of this dissertation, including the principal one if Arendt's claim of forgiveness as an indispensable political experience conforms to her account of political intersubjectivity. In posing this question, a tension in Arendt's account of forgiveness has been exposed: on the one hand, as Leif Pullich has (briefly, but importantly) remarked, forgiveness is an exception within Arendt's account of plurality: whereas an agent acts into a plurality, forgiveness is directed to one other person.[652] Plurality, we should recall, cannot be confined to a bilateral relation, whereas "the personal encounter of I and Thou," in Arendt's view, "contains less specifically political experience than almost any relationship in our average everyday lives."[653] Forgiveness, therefore, seems to introduce an apolitical form of intersubjectivity into Arendt's account of political intersubjectivity. However, rather than simply labeling Arendt's concept of forgiveness an (inadvertent) I–Thou relation, my contention is that it represents a tension between a "traditional" I-Thou form of intersubjectivity and Arendt's distinctive version of political intersubjectivity. This is because there are in fact plurality elements attached to it, which means that it does not fit easily with I-Thou relations either. First and foremost, the tension is manifest in the peculiar fact that if forgiveness is confined to a bilateral relation, the addressee of forgiveness, *trespassing*, is distinctively "plurality derived," associated not least with "the disabilities of non-sovereignty" generated by acting into "the web of relationships" (alias the Mitwelt).[654]

Yet, as we shall see in the next chapter, the question whether Arendt's concept of forgiveness conforms to her concept of political intersubjectivity is even more complex. For referring to forgiveness as a "domain of inequality," Arendt began to argue that forgiveness discriminates. The question, then, is not only if Arendt's account of forgiveness is confined to

[651] Arendt, 246.
[652] Pullich, "Hannah Arendt Über Das Verzeihen," 10.
[653] Arendt, "Concern with Politics," 443.
[654] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 237.

dyadic relations, but also if “the inequality of forgiveness” is compatible with her notion of the political.

5: Arendt's Elaborations on and Reinterpretations of Forgiveness after *The Human Condition*

Upon the publication of *The Human Condition* in 1958, Arendt reflected further on forgiveness. For one thing, she did so in discussion with the great English-American poet and critic W.H. Auden (1907-73). That Arendt discussed forgiveness with such a prominent figure is obviously *gefundenes Fressen*. The beginning of their encounter was that Auden praised *The Human Condition* in a review of June 1959. Arendt's book, he wrote, gave him the impression of "having been especially written for me" as "it seems to answer precisely those questions which I have been putting to myself."[655] Auden, who like Arendt lived in New York, was so excited about it that he contacted Arendt. This marked the beginning of a friendship. As it happens, Auden was particularly interested in Arendt's reflections on forgiveness. Yet, his overwhelming enthusiasm notwithstanding, he had some points of criticism against Arendt's conceptualization of forgiveness. In a sophisticated essay published later in 1959, he presented his own interpretation of forgiveness.[656] Although Auden did not explicitly refer to Arendt, it can be read as a response to and a critique of Arendt. This is confirmed by a most remarkable letter Arendt sent to Auden on February 14, 1960. Here Arendt replied to Auden's criticism, accepting some of it, while rejecting other parts of it, as well as criticizing some aspects of his interpretation of forgiveness.[657] Their discussion concerned questions such as: is forgiveness conditional or unconditional? Is it unlimited? How does forgiveness relate to judicial pardon as well as to charity, goodness, judgment, and sin? Is forgiveness, like law, characterized by equality, or does forgiveness discriminate, by showing a regard for the person? What is the relationship between the person and the deed, between the wrongdoer and the wrong?

Later in 1960, the German version of *The Human Condition*, entitled *Vita Activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, came out.[658] Remarkably, Arendt made several changes and additions in the section on forgiveness—a fact that rather strikingly has been ignored (in both the German and the English literature).[659] These revisions reflect her debate with Auden.[660] In other words, Arendt

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[655] Auden, "Thinking What We Are Doing," 72.
[656] Auden, "The Fallen City. Some Reflections on Shakespeare's Henry IV."
[657] Arendt, "Letter to Auden (14 February 1960)."
[658] Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa Oder Vom Tätigen Leben* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960).
[659] As to the more general fact that *Vita Activa* is not simply a translation of *The Human Condition*, see Marie Luise Knott, "The Human Condition / Vita Activa Oder Vom Tätigen Leben," in *Arendt-Handbuch. Leben, Werk, Wirkung*, ed. Wolfgang Heuer, Bernd Heiter, and Stefanie Rosenmüller (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011), 68–69.
[660] Albeit little explored, it is not that Arendt's letter to Auden has gone unnoticed; what is unexplored is that Arendt changed the section on forgiveness in *Vita Activa* and that these changes reflect her debate with Auden. See Nasser Hussain and Austin Sarat, "Toward New Theoretical Perspectives on Forgiveness, Mercy, and Clemency: An Introduction," in *Forgiveness, Mercy and Clemency. Stanford University Press, Stanford*, ed. Nasser Hussain and Austin Sarat (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1–15; Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb, *Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Messianism in Hannah Arendt and WH Auden* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Dürr, *Hannah*

incorporated several aspects of her debate with Auden in *Vita Activa*. Obviously, it testifies to the importance of these revisions that they appear in a published work and not only in a private letter. The most consequential of them concern the relationship between forgiveness and punishment and the relationship between the person (the wrongdoer) and the deed (the wrong), as well as the limits of forgiveness in politics. In addition, Arendt wrote on forgiveness in a 1966 essay on Bertolt Brecht. This essay can be read as an elaboration of some of the new ideas Arendt introduced in *Vita Activa;* particularly, it exemplifies and elaborates on one of the most important changes Arendt made in *Viva Activa*: that there is no "equality before forgiveness" since forgiveness discriminates.

Finally, Arendt reflects on forgiveness in two series of lectures, namely in "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy" and "Basic Moral Propositions," which she delivered, respectively, at New School for Social Research in 1965 and at University of Chicago in 1966.[661] These manuscripts are highly interesting because Arendt contemplates—and, again, reinterprets—forgiveness in light of the highly controversial notions of "the banality of evil" and "thoughtlessness" that she introduced two years earlier in her book on Eichmann. Whereas Arendt in *The Human Condition,* and most of her other writings on forgiveness, reflects on forgiveness in the framework of her theory of politics and action, Arendt, in these lectures, considers forgiveness in the framework of a meditation on the relationship between thinking and ethics—on the possible ethical implications of thinking, as opposed to what she saw as Eichmann's "thoughtlessness."

5.1: Forgiveness as Discriminating: Arendt's Discussion with W.H. Auden, Her Changes and Additions in *Vita Activa,* and Her Essay on Bertolt Brecht

In *The Human Condition,* Arendt argued that the deed is forgiven for the sake of the person: that "*what* was done is forgiven for the sake of *who* did it."[662] This statement is extensively cited in the commentary literature. In the letter to Auden, however, Arendt writes: "I was wrong when I said that we forgive for the sake of who did it. I may forgive somebody who betrayed me but I am not going to condone betrayal ueberhaupt [at all]. I can forgive somebody without forgiving anything."[663] In *Vita Activa,* Arendt repeats this new claim that the deed is not forgiven: "Das Vergeben bezieht sich nur auf die Person und niemals auf die Sache [...]. Denn wann ein Unrecht

Arendts Begriff des Verzeihens, 110–11; Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Judging Forgiveness: Hannah Arendt, WH Auden, and the Winter's Tale," *New Literary History* 45, no. 4 (2014): 641–63.

[661] For an editied version of these two manuscript, see Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy."

[662] Arendt, *Human Condition,* 241.

[663] Arendt, "Letter to Auden (14 February 1960)."

verziehen wird, so wird demjenigen verziehen, der es begangen hat, was natürlich nicht das Geringste da-ran ändert, daß das Unrecht unrecht war."[664]

Another of the much-cited paragraphs in *The Human Condition* is Arendt's characterization of the relation between forgiveness and punishment: "It is a structural element in the realm of human affairs that men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish and that they are unable to punish what has turned out to be unforgivable."[665] Yet, responding to Auden's critique, Arendt concedes that she was "entirely wrong" in this and that Auden is right that "punishment is a necessary alternative only to judicial pardon." Her mistake, she explains, was due to her having had in mind "the absurd position of the judges during the Nuremberg trials who were confronted with crimes of such a magnitude that they transcended all possible punishment."[666]

This part of Arendt's discussion with Auden is traceable, too, in *Vita Activa*. Here, she no longer describes punishment as a necessary alternative to forgiveness; instead, she writes that "wo uns nicht die Wahl geltassen ist, uns auch anderes zu verhalten und gegebenfalls zu bestraffen."[667] This is related to what is probably the most consequential reinterpretation in *Vita Activa*: unlike punishment, which concerns the deed and which is characterized by objectivity and equality before the law, forgiveness discriminates. As it concerns the person, it is characterized by inequality; it "can be objectively unfair and say: quod licet Iovi non licet bovi [what is permitted to Jove is not permitted to an oxen]."[668] This juxtaposing of forgiveness and punishment also reflects Arendt's debate with Auden. For example, she writes to him: "The law […] looks upon all with an equal eye, makes no distinctions, has no regard for the person. […] And judicial pardon, from this viewpoint, seems to be the point where the law breaks down: the man who receives it is no longer judged solely according to law."[669]

In addition, Arendt writes on forgiveness in a 1966 essay on Bertolt Brecht, posing the question as to whether Brecht should be forgiven his lack of political judgment.[670] This essay can be read as an elaboration of some of the new ideas that Arendt introduced in *Vita Activa;* particularly,

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[664] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 237. "Forgiveness is directed solely to the person, never to the deed […]. [O]ne forgives the person who has committed it, which naturally does not change in the least that the wrong was wrong."
[665] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.
[666] Arendt, "Letter to Auden (14 February 1960)."
[667] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 236. "we are unable to forgive if we have not been given the choice to act differently and possibly punish."
[668] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 236.
[669] Arendt, "Letter to Auden (14 February 1960)."
[670] Arendt is interested in the question of whether Brecht in his ability as a poet can be forgiven his political mistakes (such as his homage to Stalin and his eventually becoming the "poet laureate" of the GDR).

it exemplifies one of the most important changes Arendt made in *Viva Activa*: that there is no "equality before forgiveness" since forgiveness discriminates. Thus, referring to forgiveness as a "domain of inequality," Arendt contends that

> the equality before the law whose standard we commonly adopt for moral judgments as well is no absolute. […] The majesty of the law demands that we be equal—that only our acts count and not the person who committed them. The act of forgiving, on the contrary, takes the person into account […]. We always forgive some*body*, never some*thing*.[671]

Noting that poets tend to go astray politically and that they have often not made good citizens, Arendt suggests that "one shouldn't take their sins altogether seriously; […] they cannot bear as much responsibility as others must."[672] In short, her rather controversial contention is that we should "grant poets a certain latitude, such as we would hardly be willing to grant each other in the ordinary course of events."[673] In this connection, Arendt returns to the Roman saying that she quoted in *Vita Activa* ("what is permitted to Jove…"), adding that "the bitterness of the old saying cut both ways."[674] That is, it should not be understood as if some persons are "all round" more forgivable than others, but rather that they in certain areas have more "forgiveness latitude", whereas in other areas they might have less latitude than others.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that Arendt here speaks about the possibility of forgiving persons who have committed *offenses*, that is, wrongs that according to her definition in *The Human Condition* are unforgivable. Indeed, she mentions the possibility of forgiving thieves or murderers. The reason for this is that she has entirely excluded the deed from forgiveness, and so she can maintain the deed as unforgivable. This is seen by a wording remarkably reminiscent of her assertion in the letter to Auden: "We always forgive some*body*, never something."[675] Against this background, she emphasizes that one cannot forgive murder or thievery, meaning that it is solely the persons and not the deeds that can be forgiven.

The fact that the letter and the essay are so alike means that there is the same slight difference between the essay and *Vita Activa*, as there is between the letter and *Vita Activa*. In the essay, Arendt does not clarify if the fact that she now provides a possibility of forgiving murderers and thieves means that the forgiveness criterion is no longer if the violation, qua resulting from

[671] Arendt, "What Is Permitted to Jove…," 254.
[672] Arendt, 226.
[673] Arendt, 254.
[674] Arendt, 255.
[675] Arendt, 254.

action, is unintended. If it does not entail such a change, it must refer to people who unintentionally become murderers. *Unintended murder* does perhaps sound somewhat odd, but actually she does in the letter talk about forgiving what she calls "a crime passionel," as the murder then would be committed "by somebody who was not a murderer."[676] Be that as it may, one can conclude that Arendt extends the coverage of forgiveness to be, at least in some cases, inclusive of thieves and murderers, and she develops her argument of the inequality of forgiveness, while she does not clarify if she still believes that forgiveness is exclusively connected to action, and if forgiveness consequently still only includes unintended deeds.

5.2: Reassessing Forgiveness in the Framework of Thinking and Moral Considerations

Although *The Human Condition* according to most Arendt researchers is Arendt's philosophical magnus opus, the book that without doubt has brought her most fame (and infamy) is *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963). I will consider the development of Arendt's understanding of evil from a forgiveness perspective. The questions are, then, how the relationship is between the concept of the banality of evil and the concept of forgiveness in *The Human Condition*, and, secondly, what effects the development of Arendt's understanding of evil has to her concept of forgiveness. Admittedly, Arendt does not deal with forgiveness in the Eichmann-book. That it nevertheless is interesting from a forgiveness perspective is due to the fact that the issue of forgiveness to Arendt is (contrastively) connected to the issue of evil, and that *The Human Condition* is written before Arendt introduced the concept of the banality of evil. The relevance of the second question is further strengthened by the fact that Arendt in the lecture manuscript "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy" actually deals with forgiveness in light of the banality of evil.

In this lecture, Arendt talks about forgiveness in the context of a reflection on thinking and morality, that is, in relation to questions that she did not focus on in *The Human Condition*. The obvious question, then, is whether her reflections on forgiveness in the lecture can complement the concept of forgiveness in *The Human Condition*. This is not least relevant due to the fact that Arendt in *The Human Condition* detaches action from both motives and consequences, and argues that action cannot be judged morally, as well as her definition of the concept of action having the consequences for the concept of forgiveness of only addressing unintentional and unavoidable

[676] Arendt, "Letter to Auden (14 February 1960)." Furthermore, Arendt talks about unintended murder in the lecture manuscript "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," which we turn to below.

violations. To explain the different framework surrounding Arendt's reflections on forgiveness in the lecture I will include *The Life of the Mind*, specifically the first volume entitled and revolving around *Thinking*.

Arendt's concept of the banality of evil expands on her theory that radical/ absolute evil renders man superfluous and eliminates spontaneity.[677] To put it briefly, banal evil is a certain kind of radical evil: Radical evil committed by "desk-murderers," such as Eichmann. The most important change Arendt makes is regarding the *motivation* of committing such crimes: while Arendt claimed that radical evil cannot be explained or deduced from humanly understandable motives, her point with the banality of evil is that Eichmann committed monstrous crimes without being driven to it by monstrous, evil intentions.[678]

From a forgiveness perspective the interesting aspect of Arendt's interpretation of Eichmann as the personification of banal evil is that he was neither a man who knew not what he did, nor a man whose purpose or intention was to "commit evil" and hurt others; he was, as Young-Bruehl puts it, "a man who, conforming to the prevailing norms and his Führer's will, failed altogether to grasp the meaning of what he was doing."[679] By this, Arendt obviously does not believe that Eichmann was not aware that he sent millions to their death. He was not unintelligent; on the opposite he was clever and a "logistic genius."[680] But according to Arendt, this does not mean that he had demonic or otherwise monstrous motives: "Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for personal advancement, he had no motives at all."[681] That is, his offenses were not expressions of what Arendt in *The Human Condition* calls "willed evil," and herein lies the new that cannot be illuminated by the concept of forgiveness in *The Human Condition*.[682] This is due to the colossal contrast in Arendt's account of Eichmann between his offenses and his intentions. The point is that his motives were not criminal in themselves: His aim was not to kill people, but to

[677] It is a point of discussion in Arendt research whether the concept of the banality of evil is an expression of Arendt dismissing her concept of absolute evil, or whether the two concepts are compatible. However, the majority of researchers argue the latter. Amongst these are Richard Bernstein, whose interpretation I adhere to. See Bernstein, *Radical Evil*, 205–24; Richard J Bernstein, "Did Hannah Arendt Change Her Mind? From Radical Evil to the Banality of Evil," in *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later*, ed. Larry May and Jerome Kohn (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1996), 127–46.
[678] As Bernstein points out, Arendt concept of radical evil has nothing to say about the perpetrator's motives or intentions, whereas this is precisely the question she focuses upon in the Eichmann-book. Bernstein, "Did Hannah Arendt Change Her Mind? From Radical Evil to the Banality of Evil."
[679] Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 107.
[680] Einar Øverenget, *Hannah Arendt* (Copenhagen: Gad, 2002), 242.
[681] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem, a Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin, 1963), 287.
[682] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 239.

achieve advancement. Symptomatically, Eichmann claimed that his had not acted on his own initiative, but merely followed the nation's laws and the orders of his superiors.

An objection to my argument that the concept of forgiveness in *The Human Condition* cannot illuminate banal evil could be that as Eichmann's offenses are radically evil, they must be amongst what can neither be forgiven nor punished. It is true that based on that concept of forgiveness, one could categorize Eichmann as unforgivable, but it cannot be used to illuminate his intentions. In continuation of this, it is worth noticing that Arendt had no doubt that Eichmann should receive the death penalty. She emphasizes that the reason for that was not that he was responsible for the killing of a very high number of people, but that he was a new kind of criminal: a criminal who acted on the behalf of a criminal state by committing a new type of crime, crimes against humanity. She consequently warns against thinking that "the crime of murder and the crime of genocide are essentially the same."[683] In fact, it would have been more precise if I had written *annihilation* or *execution* rather than *death penalty*. This is precisely because Arendt, in line with her argument in *The Human Condition*, believes that there are crimes which are principally unpunishable.

With her concept of the banality of evil, Arendt opposes the assumption that she believes have been present from Socrates to Kant: that evil offenses presuppose evil motives. With the banality of evil, the idea is rather that evil action relies on a lack of a standpoint, on the absence of thinking, that is, what Arendt controversially calls thoughtlessness.[684] While evil in *The Human Condition* can be characterized as lack of action, Arendt describes the banality of evil as lack of thinking. Or rather, lack of thinking is the primary of Arendt's description of banal evil; because it is not that as she changes the description of evil from lack of action to lack of thinking: Eichmann did neither think nor act in Arendt's terminology. She does not, however, provide an explanation as to how the relationship is between thinking and action. But following the Eichmann-book Arendt becomes interested in the relationship between thinking and morality, and what she as a corrective to Eichmann's *thoughtlessness* calls *thoughtfulness*. This is for example the case in "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy."[685] To understand what Arendt says about forgiveness in this lecture, it is essential to understand that another theoretical framework is present. Before turning to

[683] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem, a Report on the Banality of Evil*, 272.
[684] As Schanz points out, Arendt deals almost exclusively with what Eichmann was *not* (demonical, satanic, etc.). Schanz, *Handling og ondskab*, 87. There is only one description of what he actually was: thoughtless. But this definition is unclear, not least because it is also negative: thoughtlessness is not the same as stupidity. However, as we shall see, in the lecture and in *The Life of the Mind* it becomes more clear what she meant by this term.
[685] See also Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture," *Social Research*, 1971, 417–46.

the lecture, we shall therefore consider *The Life of the Mind* for two purposes: to clarify the theoretical framework of the reflection on forgiveness in the lecture and to search for an answer to the question of action's relation to thinking and morality.

The Life of the Mind is an unfinished and posthumously published work. It consists of two volumes: *Thinking* and *Willing*, but it should have included a third volume on judgement.[686] As to thinking, Arendt's project is, as Young-Bruehl puts it, to explore "what we are doing when we think."[687] In her reflection on what we do when we think, Arendt explores and criticizes four of the negative definitions of thinking that Heidegger presented in his controversial work of 1954, *Was heißt Denken?*[688] From our perspective, it is the last of these definitions that is of interest: that thinking provides no ability to act. In particular, it is interesting because Arendt disagrees with Heidegger on this. I explore this question through a critical dialogue with Schanz' interpretation, arguing that there are some points which Schanz has not taken into consideration and which should be added to his interpretation.

Thinking is to Arendt connected to what she calls "admiring wonder."[689] Arendt points out that thinking is something fundamentally human and nothing special has to happen for wonder to occur. The problem, then, is not to explain why humans think and wonder, but rather to explain why some do not do so. Thinking, writes Arendt, "is not a prerogative of the few but an ever-present faculty in everybody; by the same token, inability to think is not a failing of the many who lack brain power but an ever-present possibility for everybody."[690] The decisive aspect of Arendt's criticism of Heidegger's claim that thinking does not provide the ability to act is that thinking, according to Arendt, is connected to a moral dimension. This means that even though one may say that thinking provides no power to act, thinking certainly does provide the power to not conduct evilly. Accordingly, Schanz argues that the ethical dimension has an imperative: "Avoid thoughtlessness. Meaning: Keep the ability to wonder intact."[691]

The main problem of Schanz' interpretation is what he leaves out of concern. This is first and foremost Arendt's basic description of thinking as "the soundless dialogue between me and

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[686] As Øverenget remarks, it is nonetheless the unwritten volume that has received the most attention. This is due to the fact that one could somewhat imagine what Arendt was "brewing" as she gave a lecture on it shortly before her death. Øverenget, *Hannah Arendt*, 247.
[687] Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 160.
[688] Martin Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1954).
[689] Schanz, *Handling og ondskab*, 90.
[690] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, ed. Mary McCarthy, vol. 1: Thinking (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978), 191.
[691] Schanz, *Handling og ondskab*, 91.

myself."[692] Second, it is a problem that Schanz considers Arendt's concept of thinking in isolation, since thinking, willing, and judgment to Arendt are interrelated concepts. Based on these two points of criticism, I will therefore seek to add to Schanz' interpretation. Common to the aspects that Schanz leaves out of his interpretation is that they touch on the places where Arendt fundamentally differs from Heidegger. Even though Schanz does mention some of Arendt's criticism of Heidegger, Schanz neglects the most fundamental ways in which Arendt differs from Heidegger. Thus, Arendt criticizes Heidegger for describing willing as an antagonist of thinking and for saying that willing and the will to dominate and rule are the same. Willing is just like action connected to spontaneity, and in *The Life of the Mind* Arendt presents Heidegger's view on willing as an example of the hostility in the philosophical tradition toward human spontaneity.[693] Young-Bruehl has analyzed Arendt's understanding of the relationship between thinking, willing, and judgement, arguing convincingly that they are interrelated concepts. From the perspective as to whether thinking, because of its ethical dimension, is connected to action, the link judgement and thinking is particularly interesting: judgement provides thinking with a "relatedness to others that thinking in solitude does not have."[694] This is connected to Arendt's basic definition of thinking as a reflexive, *dialogical* activity, which exactly is essential to the ethical dimension she ascribes to thinking. Here, "Arendt's Socrates" should be mentioned, as he is Arendt's ideal of thinking as a dialogical activity.

Socrates, says Arendt, precisely understood thinking as an inner dialogue and its purpose was to be true to oneself, to one's conscience, in the same way as the objective of Socratic conversation and maieutics is to reconcile people with their conscience. Socrates did, according to Arendt, not share Plato's prejudices against opinions. Though Plato does present Socrates as a truth seeker, Socrates' aim was not truth but rather more qualified and judicious opinions and to keep the dialogue going. As Young-Bruehl points out, the objective of thinking is to continue thinking. And thinking will not continue if one rests in truths or if one is hostile toward one's interlocutor.[695] The latter is the basis of what Arendt in her lecture calls Socrates' "moral proposition": that it is better to suffer evil than to do evil, as this will destroy the "me-and-myself" relationship and one will come

[692] Arendt, Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 185.
[693] Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 1: Thinking*, 173; Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 196.
[694] Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 198.
[695] Young-Bruehl, 188.

into conflict with oneself: one will be hostile toward one's inner interlocutor, or as Arendt puts it: "I cannot do certain things because having done them I can no longer be able to live with myself."[696]

Arendt thus believes that the core of the ethical dimension of thinking can be seen in the figure of Socrates. As Øverenget points out, this is especially pertinent in times of conflict and crisis.[697] Socrates lived at a time where traditional morality was disintegrating. As Arendt puts it in her lecture, in the 1930s and 1940s we saw "a total collapse of all established moral standards in public and private life."[698] As Eichmann exemplifies, in situations such as those, one cannot adhere to existing laws and norms. In those situations, it becomes obvious that morality is based on "the standard of the self": "Morality concerns the individual in his singularity. The criterion of right and wrong [...] depends in the last analysis [...] on what I decide with regard to myself."[699] Based on this Socratic model, one can say that thoughtfulness is to think dialogically, while thoughtlessness is the lack of inner dialogue. To perform thinking as an inner dialogue means that one "tells oneself" about one's experiences "as a kind of story, preparing it in this way for its subsequent communication to others."[700] In this sense one could say that thinking's intra-relational dialogue is connected to, or at least "sets the stage for," action and the intersubjectivity of talking, which goes along with Young-Bruehl's pointing out of thinking being related to judgement.

What can one conclude from these observations on the relationship between thinking and action? Primarily, one can say that the ethical implications of thinking manifest themselves solely by thinking preventing evil "non-action," corresponding to what Arendt calls "to do wrong."[701] In *The Life of the Mind,* Arendt writes nothing on how "to do wrong" relates to *trespassing* and *offenses*; but seeing that it is "non-action" it must be the equivalent of offenses. The big question is what effect it has to Arendt's concepts of action and forgiveness in *The Human Condition*? Does being thoughtful entail that one will not commit offenses? And if so, will it be any type of offense, or only the radically evil ones? The answer to this must be that it at least prevents radical evil, and probably also offenses in a broader sense, but that this is not something Arendt explicates. However, since this only has to do with non-action, it does not help in solving the problematic aspects of action, forgiveness, and trespassing: It has no implications to Arendt's

[696] Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 1: Thinking*, 97.
[697] Øverenget, *Hannah Arendt*, 253.
[698] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 52.
[699] Arendt, *Life of the Mind. Volume 2: Willing*, 97.
[700] Arendt, 94.
[701] Arendt, 94.

concept of action being detached both from motives and consequences, and that action cannot be judged morally, and that forgiveness consequently addresses only "innocent violations" in the shape of trespassing.

As to Schanz' assertion that thinking gives power to not conduct evil,[702] one can add that it means that thinking is not connected to action: the ethical dimension of thinking only relates to doings which would not qualify as action.[703] This harmonizes with Arendt's argument in *The Human Condition* of action not being able to be judged morally and with the disjunctive relationship between action and evil. That this harmonizes with the argument in *The Human Condition* means that it does not bring us closer to a solution to the problems connected with this argument.

Thoughtfulness prevents evil non-action, but the unanswered question is how the relationship between action and thoughtfulness, the ethical dimension of thinking, relates to action. If we here revisit Arendt's criticism of Plato, that he separates action from thought, the question is if Arendt actually does something similar to action and thinking (though from quite different premises and arguments)? The critical question is if Arendt does not separate action and thinking as her concept of action is so "freely floating" and detached from intentions, motives, consequences, and moral standards that action, as she quite tellingly puts it, "proceed from nowhere?"[704]

There is another crucial aspect Schanz omits; an aspect I have not mentioned until now because it can function as a transition into the inclusion of the concept of forgiveness in the lecture: that Arendt not merely changes her focus (from "to think what we do," to considering what we do when we think), but that there is also a new view on thinking, as she in *The Life of the Mind*, as opposed to *The Human Condition*, argues that thinking is a possibility for everybody.[705] This is also what she argues in the lecture.[706] Consequently, her view on thinking in the lecture is homologous with her view on action in *The Human Condition*: it is a possibility, but not a reality,

[702] Schanz, *Handling og ondskab*, 90.
[703] More precisely, one could argue that the ethical dimension only has to do with evil doings. This is due to the negative definition: that thinking gives power to abstain from evil doings, whereas Arendt writes nothing on thinking leading to "good doings." The problem about this is that in some cases one can "do wrong" and become guilty by not doing anything (as in "sins of omission"). As to Socrates' understanding that acknowledging the good necessarily will lead to acting thereafter, means that Arendt differs from this by merely believing that thinking can make one abstain from "non-action" in the shape of evil deeds. However, one could argue in Arendt's defense that it is implicit that thinking can lead to "good doings", not least due to the connection between thinking and judgement; but considering that this is an important question, one can apropos say that it is a sin of omission that Arendt does not explicate it.
[704] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 190.
[705] Arendt, 5.
[706] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 93–97.

for everybody. This results in several remarkable homologies between action and thinking: homologous with her differentiation in *The Human Condition* between *who* and *what* one is, Arendt in the lecture speaks about "the quality of being a person," and about personality, as distinguished from "merely being human."[707] In both cases, existentialist speaking, existence precedes essence: while one according to the argument in *The Human Condition* "actualizes" "the sheer passive givenness of [one's] being" through action and thereby uncovers one's unique and distinctive identity, Arendt argues in the lecture that through thinking one asserts one's identity and "constitute[s] [oneself] a person."[708] While the disclosure of *who* one is happens through one's actions, personality is "the simple, almost automatic result of thoughtfulness."[709] But whereas action cannot be judged morally, thinking and morality are so intimately connected that "to speak about a moral personality is almost a redundancy."[710]

As to the homology in forgiveness: while Arendt's argument in *The Human Condition* is that to be able to be forgiven, it is necessary to have acted and thereby having uncovered one's *who*, she argues in her lecture that one can only be forgiven if one through thinking has "actualized" one's personality and has become a person. In fact, Arendt uses the term *person* in *The Human Condition* as well, but even though it is the same word, it appears in different contexts, respectively action and thinking, and respectively as synonyms for *who* one is and for *personality*.[711] This means that when Arendt in the lecture manuscript writes that "in rootless evil there is no person left whom one could ever forgive," then it is merely a structural equality, that is, a homology, with Arendt's argument in *The Human Condition*. This is to say that Arendt's concept of forgiveness in the lecture, as opposed to the concept of forgiveness in *The Human Condition*, illuminates Eichmann's banal evil. It does so since "the quality of being a person," relates to "being merely human," as thoughtfulness relates to thoughtlessness.[712] Accordingly, one can say that Eichmann was "merely human," and that his unforgivableness is due to his thoughtlessness: that he has not through thinking actualized his personality and that there thus "is no person left whom one could ever forgive."[713] Arendt expands on this by writing that it is the person "as it appears in circumstances and intentions," whom is forgiven and that the problem with Nazi criminals like Eichmann was

[707] Arendt, 79.
[708] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 208; Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 95.
[709] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 95.
[710] Arendt, 79, 95, 100.
[711] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 243.
[712] Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 95.
[713] Arendt, 95.

exactly that they "renounced voluntarily all personal qualities [...]. They protested time and again that they have never done anything out of their own intentions whatsoever, good or bad." This means that

> the greatest evil perpetrated is the evil committed by nobodies, that is, by human beings who refuse to be persons. […] [W]rongdoers who refuse to think themselves what they are doing and who also refuse in retrospect to think about it […], have actually failed to constitute themselves into somebodies. By stubbornly remaining nobodies they prove themselves unfit for intercourse with others who, good, bad, or indifferent, are at the very least persons.[714]

While Arendt's differentiation in the essay on Brecht between *somebody* and *something* is a differentiation between wrong and wrongdoer, her differentiation between *somebody* and *nobody* is a differentiation between different types of perpetrators: the categorically unforgivable and the, at least potentially, forgivable. This means that *somebody* relates to *nobody* as "the quality of being a person," relates to "being merely human," and as thoughtfulness relates to thoughtlessness.

Since forgiveness is an action, one could be occasioned to believe that Arendt indirectly touches on the question of action's relationship to thinking and morality. However, we should bear in mind that it is only in a political context that forgiveness is an action, and the framework around Arendt's reflections on forgiveness in the lecture is not action, but thinking and morality (which is probably the explanation why Arendt does not use the expression *the act of forgiveness* in the lecture). Thus, Arendt's theory of forgiveness in the lecture can on one hand be construed as complementing the concept of forgiveness in *The Human Condition*, as it is applicable to what the concept of forgiveness in *The Human Condition* cannot illuminate: the contrast in the banality of evil between intentions and deeds. On the other hand, the two theories of forgiveness are disintegrated and "unconnected," which is due to Arendt not clarifying what effects her revised view on thinking and her argument of its ethical implications have on the relationship between action and thinking.

[714] Arendt, 111–12.

Conclusion

Let us begin with the fundamental question pointed to in the title: did Arendt succeed in developing an account of forgiveness and guilt as political intersubjectivity? As we have seen, this is a complex issue to which there is no single answer. We must therefore divide this question into several sub-questions: does Arendt's account (in *The Human Condition* and *Vita Activa*) of (1) forgiveness and (2) *trespassing* conform to her conception of political intersubjectivity? Also, this entails the question as to what extent, if any, Arendt's notion of *trespassing* can be rendered guilt and, by implication, whether Arendt's notion of forgiveness is effectively a form of excuse.

Only one of these questions can be answered clearly in the affirmative: *trespassing* does conform to Arendt's notion of political intersubjectivity. But the question as to whether *trespassing* can be rendered guilt is much less clear. It bears repeating that the only time Arendt explicitly referred to *trespassing* as guilt, she wrote *guilt* in quotation marks. What we can conclude, though, is that *trespassing* fits uneasily with conventional modern liberal notions of guilt and responsibility based on acts, (foreseeable) consequences, and the individual autonomous subject. This is not least because on Arendt's analysis of political action, it is not possible to trace or establish the relation between agent, act, and consequence. Indeed, this untraceability was what Arendt referred to as the "frustration" of action, namely the "frustration" of "the anonymity of its authors", which signified "the impossibility of ever holding an individual [agent] responsible for the outcome" of acting.[715] Arendtian actors are not *zurechenbar* (imputable); to the contrary, given the conditions of non-sovereignty and contingency, acting humans are to "assume responsibility in the unpredictable [*im Unberechenbare Verantwortung zu übernehmen*]."[716] For "the actor never remains the master of his acts," and he is not able to foretell their consequences.[717] Indeed, for Arendt, the ignorance and non-sovereignty of acting persons are the grounds for forgiving.[718] Yet ever since Aristotle, ignorance has been seen as extenuating. The question, then, is if *trespassing* conforms to other approaches to or theories of guilt and responsibility.

Essentially, these frustrations and predicaments result from (actualized) plurality and the attendant "condition of non-sovereignty;" and, as explained in chapter four, my contention is that Arendt's notion of *trespassing* is to be read as part of her largescale project of rethinking traditional concepts from the perspective of plurality. As she put it in her aforementioned

[715] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 220. Arendt, *Vita Activa Oder Vom Tätigen Leben*, 214; "die Unmöglichkeit, für das Entstandene je einen Einzelnen verantwortlich zu machen."
[716] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 136; September 1951.
[717] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 235.
[718] Arendt, 239.

Denktagebuch entry of 1953, "one needs first to reconsider all philosophical statements on Man under the assumption that men, not Man, inhabit the earth." Thus, based on her cardinal belief in "plurality as the first philosophy," so to speak, she programmatically called for

> a philosophy for which men exist only in the plural. Its field is human plurality. Its religious source is the second creation myth—not Adam the rib, but: Male and female created he them. In the realm of plurality, which is the political realm, one has to ask all the old questions—what is love, what is friendship, what is solitude, what is acting, thinking, etc., but not the one question of philosophy: Who is Man, nor the *Was kann ich wissen, was darf ich hoffen, was soll ich tun?* [What can I know, what may I hope for, what ought I to do?][719]

Trespassing, in other words, was Arendt's attempt to rethink political responsibility on the condition of plurality and non-sovereignty, as distinguished from autonomous subjects of reason in the singular. In this regard, Arendt's notion of *trespassing* is congenial to both post-structuralist and phenomenological accounts. But given Arendt's interpretation of political intersubjectivity as a nexus of self, others, and a shared world, her approach was phenomenological. More specifically, our exploration showed that Arendt, with her notion of *trespassing*, appropriated key attributes of Heidegger's existential-ontological account of *Schuld* as "being thrown into assuming responsibility;" particularly his rendition of guilt following from Dasein's inability to "master the circumstances" it has been "thrown into."[720] The decisive modification or transformation was that Arendt "transferred" these features to a distinctively intersubjective framework, insisting that they proceeded not from individual Dasein's existential indebtedness (*Schuldig-sein*), but from actualized plurality. My contention, then, was an elaboration on, and extension of, what in the literature on Arendt's debt to Heidegger has been identified as her overall approach: a critical-transformative appropriation of Heideggerian categories through her signature concepts of plurality and action. Moreover, our exploration showed that Arendt, in her chapters on forgiveness and promising, polemically employed the Heideggerian notion of *Mitwelt*: not only did she redefine Mitwelt by lifting Heidegger's distinction between an ontological and ontic level, so that Mitwelt only comes into being by the actual presence of other (acting) humans (that is, what Loidolt calls "actualized plurality"); also, she "replaced" the Heideggerian call of conscience with the "call of the with-world," which summons the individual out of self-isolation into "the presence of others

[719] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 295 (January 1953).
[720] "Guilt as being thrown into assuming responsibility" is Carman's encapsulation of Heidegger's account; see Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic*, 285. For an analysis of Dasein's being-guilty as following from the unmasterable circumstances it has been thrown into, see Schalow and Denker, *Historical Dictionary of Heidegger's Philosophy*, 68–69.

who act-with [mit-handeln] and are-with [mit-sind]."[721] And whereas the Heideggerian past and future horizon was characterized by *Schuld* and being-unto-death, respectively, the Arendtian outlook was one of forgiveness and promise.

While Arendt's notion of *trespassing* fits better with phenonological approaches to responsibility that take relationality as point of departure, rather than autonomous individuals, and while Arendt arguably provided the rudiments for an intrinsic political ethics, this does not quite answer the question as to whether *trespassing* can be rendered guilt. I believe that this remains, at best, debatable. At the very least, it can be concluded that not only does *trespassing* fit uneasily with everyday understandings of guilt; it also does not conform to Arendt's own understanding of guilt, as she presented it in her writings on guilt and responsibility. This was made plain by what was an important task of this dissertation: to consider the relation between Arendt's conception of forgiveness and *trespassing*, on the one hand, and her interpretation of guilt and responsibility, on the other. This comparison revealed that while Arendt advocated a political concept of forgiveness, she insisted that guilt cannot be political. Further, where Arendt held that it is impossible to hold an agent responsible for the outcome of acting, she maintained that action always singles out. Moreover, *trespassing* did not conform to her description of political responsibility; for, apart from the question of whether it would make sense to forgive a responsibility, the basic point with Arendt's notion of political intersubjectivity was that it is vicarious: that one assumes responsibility for something of which one is not guilty. *Trespassing*, in turn, is not vicarious: even if an agent could neither foresee it, nor avoid it, his or her acting has resulted in "damage." However, there is one common feature between *trespassing* and guilt: both denote an objective understanding of guilt, in the sense that they refer "to an act, not to intentions or potentialities."[722] Arendt's reflections in the *Denktagebuch* also testified to such an objective understanding; indeed, she was so alert to conceptions of guilt that referred to anything but the deed that she employed *Unrecht* ("wrong") as a corrective term to *Schuld*.

The question whether Arendt's concept of forgiveness conforms to her concept of political intersubjectivity is even more complex. As we have seen, this basically depended on two questions. The first was if forgiveness conformed to plurality, which cannot be confined to two persons, or if it is a dyadic, non-political form of intersubjectivity. The second question was if "the inequality of forgiveness" is compatible with her notion of the political.

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[721] Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 236: "Anwesenheit von Anderen die mit-sind und mit-handeln." Arendt, *Human Condition,* 243.
[722] Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," 2003, 147.

As to the latter question, the answer was affirmative; for, in her reflections on Brecht, Arendt stated that the question can be answered in the affirmative with reference that "the equality before the law whose standard we commonly adopt for moral judgments as well is no absolute." Also, in her lecture notes from the mid-1950s, Arendt stated that political forgiveness is based on the recognition that "Justice is never enough."[723] As to the first question, the result of our exploration was that it cannot simply be concluded that Arendtian forgiveness is effectively a dyadic relationship. This was first and foremost because forgiveness is directed to *trespassing*, which is distinctively "plurality derived." On the other hand, Arendt speaks of "the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven."[724] This suggests that rather than simply labeling Arendt's account of forgiveness an (inadvertent) I–Thou relation, it could more accurately be characterized as representing a tension between a "traditional" I-Thou form of intersubjectivity and Arendt's distinctive version of political intersubjectivity.

Moreover, I have explored the fact that Arendt continuously changed her account of forgiveness. In tracing its development, a main finding was that Arendt's *Denktagebuch* is a key document that sheds new light on her take on forgiveness. Indeed, our exploration demonstrated that it was formative to her thinking on forgiveness; for, while Arendt continuously reinterpreted forgiveness, her most profound change of mind took place in the *Denktagebuch*: in entries from 1950 to 1953, she made a "conceptual U-turn," going from opposing to promoting forgiveness. Likewise, she here developed several ideas fundamental to her later, more famous account in *The Human Condition*. By the same token, our exploration showed that Arendt also engaged with forgiveness in some lecture notes from the mid-1950s. Notably, our exploration showed that Arendt's positive view of forgiveness was connected to, and depended on, a different view as to what forgiveness is. In other words, what she began to recommend was not identical to what she had previously rejected. Essentially, her change of mind was contingent upon a political-intersubjective reinterpretation: namely, that she began to see forgiveness and the correlating notion of guilt as genuinely political-intersubjective phenomena. Her intersubjective reinterpretation reflected the largescale project that she undertook during this period: that of, as it were, establishing plurality as a first philosophy—of "reconsidering all philosophical statements" from the perspective of plurality.[725]

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[723] Hannah Arendt, "The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism," The Hannah Arendt Papers at the Library of Congress, Essays and lectures, lecture, New School for Social Research, New York, N.Y., 1953, p. 13 (Series: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975, n.d.).
[724] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.
[725] Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 295 (January 1953).

Further, our exploration showed that Arendt continued to reflect on, and change her mind about, forgiveness after the publication of *The Human Condition* in 1958. An important finding was that Arendt's discussion of forgiveness with Auden led her to change her mind on forgiving, and that she revised her chapter on forgiveness in *Vita Activa* (1960) with a view to some of the points she had discussed with Auden. The most consequential of them concerned the relationship between forgiveness and punishment and the relationship between the person (the wrongdoer) and the deed (the wrong), as well as the limits of forgiveness in politics. Finally, we saw that Arendt's essay of 1966 on Brecht can be read as an elaboration on some of the new ideas that she had introduced in *Vita Activa*, and particularly her claim that forgiveness discriminates.

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